This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

The Library

of the

University of Wisconsin

Digitized by Google

A
10,625

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

George James Neale
The Nottingham Claim
New Rush.
Griqua Land West
Jan: 1874.

TO THE CAPE FOR DIAMONDS.

And
Road 24.
Colesberg Kopje
Diamond Fields
South Africa

Digitized by Google

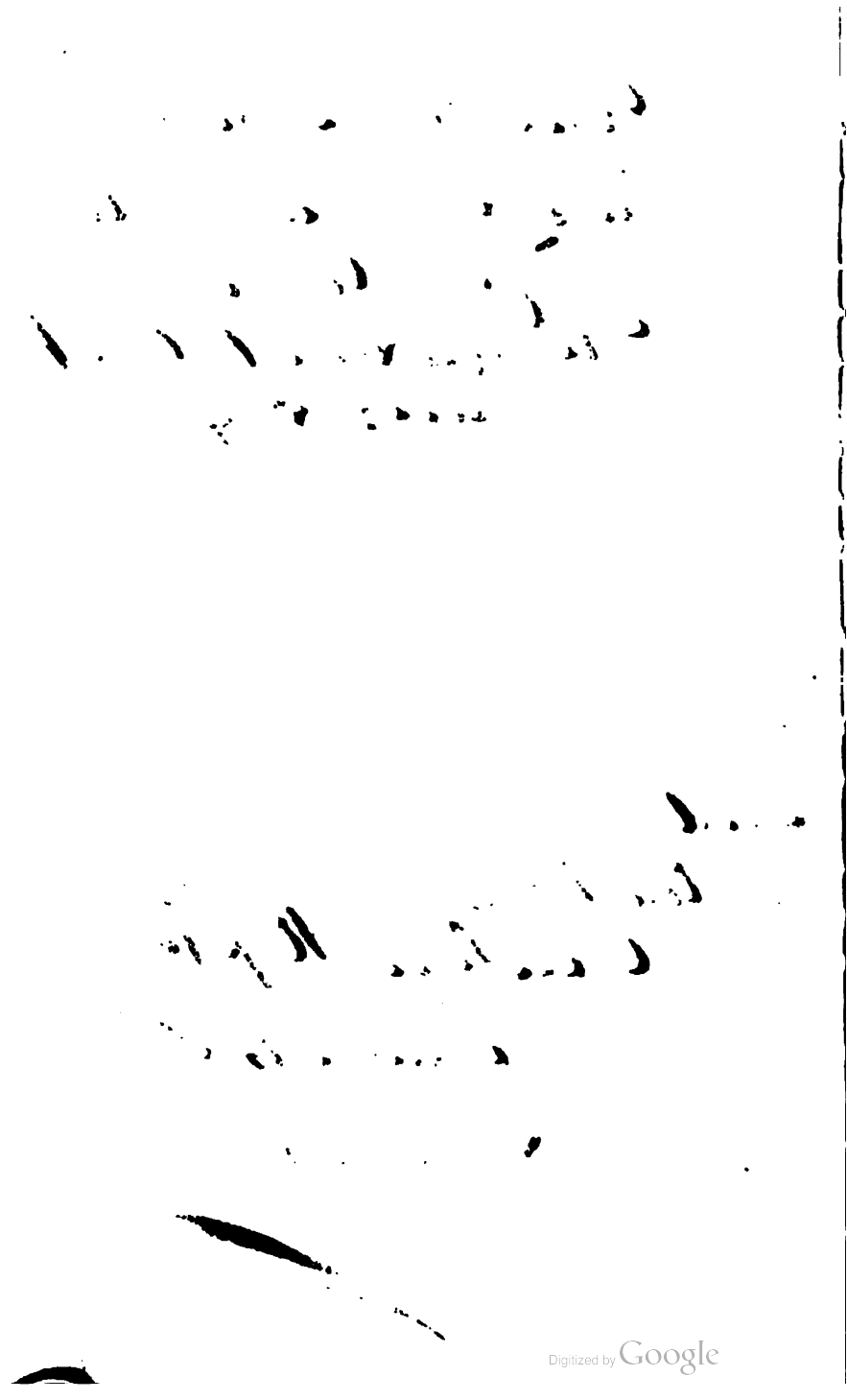
Digitized by Google

George James Neale
The "Nottingham" Claim
New Rush.
Griqua Land West.
Jan: 1874.

TO THE CAPE FOR DIAMONDS.

And.
Road 24.
Colesberg Kopje
Diamonds Fields
South Africa

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google

TO THE CAPE FOR DIAMONDS.

A STORY OF

DIGGING EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

WITH

COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND MISCELLANEOUS, UPON THE PRESENT STATE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE DIAMOND FIELDS.

BY

FREDERICK BOYLE,

AUTHOR OF "ADVENTURES AMONG THE DYAKS," "A RIDE ACROSS A CONTINENT," "CAMP NOTES," ETC. ETC.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1873.

Digitized by Google

LONDON:
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.,
CITY ROAD.

Digitized by Google

A
10,625

21770

Co

Dedication.

TO

LIONEL LAWSON, ESQ.

IT is natural, my dear Lawson, that I should dedicate to you the record of a journey undertaken at your instance, and preserved, to a great part, in my letters to you, here imprinted.

The story I had to tell in those letters was one so striking and so novel, it must indeed have been a clumsy pen that failed to give it interest. How far I succeeded is no longer question for your kindly and partial judgment. The public must pronounce.

But, be that verdict never so favourable, I shall still be your debtor. Not with a few score pages of narrative can I repay the hours your subtle humour has laughed away, or graver wisdom has turned to profit. For these, friendship alone can offer a poor return.

That friendship, my dear Lawson, you know yourself to possess. With all my heart I here subscribe the acknowledgment.

FREDERICK BOYLE.

18, NEW BOND STREET,
August 1st, 1872.

320
Lawson

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

IN so far as this book is a narrative, I have no need to preface it, unless with a limitation self-evident. What strictures may be found herein upon Cape Colony, whether in its aspect and value as an agricultural country, or in the character and manners of its people, are to be considered only as applying to the parts of it I saw. There is, indeed, every reason to believe that a visit to the Eastern districts would have justified a very different report. To others it may be given to draw up this happier and brighter description, but a conscientious writer tells only what he sees. Let me not, however, be supposed to have portrayed the whole colony in sketching the Karoo, or West Griqualand.

But I have also criticized certain acts of the Cape Government. A prudent man, in weighing the value of these, will ask, From what point of view does the author write—which way lies his interest? Let me state, then, that I have no interest either way, nor any point of view save that of mere justice. I am neither digger nor landowner. The object of my journey was to report conscientiously the state of things upon the diamond fields, their commercial value, and the probabilities of their future. What may be found herein of censure upon any class or any custom, is, at least, an unbiassed opinion.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE VOYAGE OUT.

PAGE

The Union Mail Company—Its steamer *Cambrian*—Evil prophecies—Madeira reached—An increasing list to port—Sudden change of course—Three hundred miles back to St. Helena—Another start—Loss of Mr. Frederick Vizetelly—The chief engineer again—Four watches of coal aboard, and seven hundred miles from land—Council of officers called at two A.M.—Running for the nearest land—Burning of spars, cables, and bridge—Commander Dyer, R.N., at the wheel—Terrible dangers and anxieties—Land at last—Saldanha Bay, seventy-two miles from Capetown 1

CHAPTER II.

SALDANHA BAY TO CAPETOWN.

I desert the *Cambrian* with two friends—Spirited offer of Mr. Doveton—Vanderbyl's store—Mr. Albertyne and his house—Antelopes—Scenery round Saldanha Bay—Agricultural prospects and methods—The character of a dam—of a boer farmhouse—Appearance and habits of the boer—Homestead laws—Darling—Mamre—Dangerous drive—Mossul-bank Bridge—Moving sand-hills—Capetown . . 13

CHAPTER III.

THE CASE AT ISSUE BETWEEN ENGLAND, THE FREE STATE, AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

The absolute necessity of England's annexation of Waterboer's territory—The threatened Diamond-field Republic—Outcry of the Albanian Farmers—The division of the Griquas—Recognition of both clans by the Capetown Government—Kornelis Kok—Counter assertions—

Digitized by Google

PAGE

Foundation of the Transvaal and Free State—Occupation of Bloemfontein by Sir Harry Smith—Major Warden and his grants—Abandonment of the Sovereignty—Article 2 of Sir G. Clerk's Convention—Declaration of the Vetberg boundary—Withdrawal of Waterboer's subsidy—Appearance on the scene of Mr. David Arnot—His first success—Resignation of Kornelis Kok in favour of young Adam—Death of Kornelis Kok—Retirement of young Adam Kok and his tribe into Nomansland—Sale of his lands to the Free State through Mr. Harvey—Waterboer's five points—Annexation of Griqualand West to the English Crown—Arrival of the Commissioners—Extent of the new annexation—The claims of the South African Republic—General arming of the negroes 29

CHAPTER IV.

CAPETOWN TO THE FIELDS.

Routes to the diamond fields—From Capetown—From Port Elizabeth—From Natal—The Cape cart—The waggon—Arrival of the *Cambrian*—Wellington—The free lovers or *vederdoopers*—Start for the fields—Our conveyance—Bain's Kloof—Scenery—Curious accident—Mitchell's Kloof—Ceres—Conradin's outspan—My fellow-passengers—The Karoo Port—Rumours of gold—Mr. Dunn—The Karoo—The Gouff—Tramps—An exhibition of diamonds—Beaufort West—Ostrich farming—Victoria—Night adventure—Hopetown—The Orange River—Pniel 44

CHAPTER V.

THE CAMP OF PNIEL.

A desolate scene—Pniel of two years ago—Deserted claims—Jardine's hotel—Diggers and old acquaintances—Our new inspectors—Dinner—Feelings and wishes of the diggers at this time 78

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORY OF THE DIAMOND FIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA, AND CONSIDERATIONS ON THE POLICY OF GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE DIGGING POPULATION AND THE PROPRIETORS OF THE SOIL.

Ancient knowledge of the diamond fields—Immemorial use of diamonds by Bushmen—The rediscovery—The Hopetown diamond—The Star of South Africa—The rush to the Vaal banks—Mr. Gregory's Report to Emanuel—Mr. Coster's progress—Rapid growth of the population—Manner of self-government—Rules—Mr. President Parker—

Digitized by Google

PAGE

The eccentricities of his rule—Arrival of Mr. Campbell, Civil Commissioner—Necessity of his appointment—The Diamond Field Republic scheme—Command of the Transvaal at Hebron—First Rumours of Dutoitspan—Rushing of that farm—Establishment of the London and South African Exploration Company—Of the Hopetown Diamond Company—Project of law in the Orange Free State *Volksraad*—The confiscation decree—Premature divulging of the law, which causes the rush of Bultfontein—Bultfontein brought under the committee of Dutoitspan—What is meant by the landowners' concurrence—May 15th, 1871—Appointment of Mr. Trutter by the Free State—The annexation—The proclamations—Article 29 of No. 71—Serious loss to proprietors under new system—The officials sent to West Griqualand—The question of wells 84

CHAPTER VII.

DUTOITSPAN.

Back from Pniel to the Dry Diggings—The road—The pebbles—Job's Canteen—The Halfway House Canteen—The flies—Busy road—First glimpse of New Rush—The roads, the tents, the sortings, the claims, the canteens, the market square, the mess—Old de Beers—A hedge of carcases—Dutoitspan—Benning and Martin's—Order and routine in that hostelry—Luncheon—Prices 106

CHAPTER VIII.

BULTFONTEIN AND ALEXANDERSFONTEIN.

A drive through Bultfontein—The purlieus of a camp—The poor man's digging—A labyrinth of holes—Careless act of the inspectors—Alexandersfontein diggings thrown into Bultfontein—Alexandersfontein—The house—Abundance of water on this property—Reputed diamond kopjes on Alexandersfontein—Adventure of the bed, the baby, and the baize partition 119

CHAPTER IX.

THE MANNER OF DIGGING FOR DIAMONDS, WITH NOTES ON THE PECULIARITIES OF THE GEMS FOUND AT NEW RUSH, DUTOITSPAN, AND BULTFONTEIN, RESPECTIVELY.

Size and situation of the four dry diggings—Proportion of diamondiferous ground to the farms—Opening a new "rush"—Character of soils—Manner of working—The riddling—The sorting—Chances of loss—Incredible recklessness of diggers—Accidental discoveries—Cost of

Digitized by Google

PAGE

tools — Sanitary effects on the digger — Other minerals and substances found in digging—Mr. Dunn's analysis of the siftings—Cape carbonate — Peculiarities of each digging—Depth of claims—The roads of New Rush—Great want of them at Dutoitspan and elsewhere—How it happened—The principle of diamond mining discovered step by step—The deadlock at Dutoitspan—Outside diggers begin to refuse right of way 123

CHAPTER X.

THE NEWEST RUSH.

Dawn at Camp—The early market—Our market master—Prices in November, '71—Uncertainty of the market—In search of the newest rush—Found at last—Its appearance—Taking out claims—Confusion in all departments of government—The vagaries of the post-office—Courtesy of Mr. Commissioner Thompson—Bultfontein House—My room therein—The beetles, the spiders, the ants, the scorpions, the goat, the intruders—Cost of repairs and furniture—Our life at "The Residence"—Our servants—Their musical lovers—Our cuisine. . 138

CHAPTER XI.

KLIPDRIFT.

A lucky digger's history—Drive to Pniel—The dogs of Pniel—Vengeance on them—The Klipdrift shore—Established and respectable appearance of this camp—The story of the concession of Klipdrift—Utter block—Mr. Webb's perseverance—Klipdrift most unsuitable as a metropolis—Out of the way, bearing no population, having no future—Dutoitspan the natural metropolis of Griqualand—Obvious objections to Klipdrift—Its distance, on the other side of a dangerous stream—Discontent of the diggers—Their criticism of the Commissioners and their acts—Unaccountable action of the Government in this matter—Unchecked sale of arms at Klipdrift—What I heard on this subject in Capetown—Opening of the High Court of Griqualand—Solemn ceremonies—Hospitality of the Bar—Return to Dutoitspan 149

CHATER XII.

DIARY OF EVENTS.

Abandon of newest rush—Furnishing my chamber in the Residence—Dissolution of the Committees and revocation of their laws—Sudden death of Mr. Webb's boy—The behaviour of our musical maid-servants in this event—Awful rumours of plague—A curiosity in diamonds—Diamond picked up in the road at our door—A doctor's

Digitized by Google

PAGE

stories of the epidemic—Influence of the Marabastad gold fields—Inspector Rorke's proceedings—Jumping claims—The new rules—Cape rubies or garnets—Litigation at the fields—Alarming rumours at New Rush—Story of a typical digger—The meeting in the market square—The audience, the chairman, the speakers—Opposing parties—Mr. Kelsey's harangue—The end of these proceedings—The Commissioners refuse to recognise the result—My fellow-passengers of the *Cambrian* arrive—Alexandersfontein House—Irrigation there—The official report of deaths at Dutoitspan—Analysis of it—Object of the panic-mongers—Luck at last for S.—Revisit New Rush—First notice of the tent licenses—Justice of that attempt—A proof that time is money here—I look out the ninety-five carat Bultfontein claim—Its present condition—Abandon all hope of clearing it—The canteen law proclaimed—Prices of claims at New Rush—A Kaffir trader—Buy a quarter claim—My agreement for the working of it—Confusion of affairs at the Post-office—The great digger Bantje—Gutter-picking for diamonds—Bullied by a well-sinker—First prophecy of the New Rush riots 162

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW RUSH RIOTS.

Important legal question at issue between well-sinkers and proprietors—Rumours of disturbance at New Rush—Confirmation—The Hottentot's confession—Trial and sentence of Ascher unheard—Execution—The mob get the upper hand—Stoppage of a bridal party in Main Street—Threatening attitude of the rioters towards the landowners—Sack and pillage proposed—Mr. Gilfillan comes on the scene—His harangue—Another tent burnt—Fickleness of the crowd—The innocent owner reimbursed quadruply—A march on Dutoitspan proclaimed—Mr. Gilfillan stops the rioters—A groundswell of disorder next day—Threats sent to Dutoitspan traders—Mr. Kelsey, the agitator, receives warning that his store will be burnt—Swearing in special constables—Quiet restored—Reflections on this dangerous outbreak 180

CHAPTER XIV.

HOPETOWN.

Start for Hopetown—Scenery—Komering's dam—The Mod River—Jacobsdaal—Most miserable hospitality—The Riet River—Salt-pans—Belmont—Cordial hosts—Mr. Wayland's farms and stock—Agriculture *versus* pasture in South Africa—The Orange River—Hopetown, its aspect, population, and trade—Feathers and karosses, their value

Digitized by Google

PAGE

—The boer trade—Mr. David Arnot: his history, his house, his hopes, and his hospitality—A visit to the leper hospital at Hopetown —Disgraceful niggardliness of the authorities—An awful scene—The course of the disease, its nature, and its cure 187

CHAPTER XV.

A VISIT TO WATERBOER'S ESTATE.

A visit to the Junction—Outspan at the house when first diamond was discovered—Mr. Gers's store at the Hook—Kindly hosts—The two rivers—Fish—Cross the junction—Waterboer's country-house—A village of Basuto Kaffirs—The people and their houses—Their wealth obtained through diamonds—The Star of South Africa found here—Roy Kop—Diamond said to be found there—Its purchase and sale —Scenery of Roy Kop—Unusual abundance of quartz—Arrival of a trader from Namaqualand—Great drought there—Game preserving by Kaffir chiefs—Necessity of such laws—The story of Clarke the trader—His heroic death—Important results of this event—Performance of a bushman—Value of these slaves—Return to Hopetown—Assault on a white man in the street—Astonishing news from Dutoitspan—The probable result of Captain Rorke's action—A public ball in Hopetown—Return to Bultfontein—Survey of the country visited in their journeys—Filthy habits of the boers 204

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRIAL OF THE RIOTERS.

Stirring rumours at Hopetown—The truth of them—A biter bitten—Imminent danger of Messrs. W—— from the mob—Christmas stories of the diggings—Ghastly tale from Benning and Martin's—Native thefts—Story of Stewart and his Kaffirs—Mr. Giddy, our new magistrate—Warrants issued against three leading rioters—Threatening crowds—Hearing of the case—The prosecutor and the prisoners—Indecorous scenes in court—The New Rush offered for bail—Ovation to the accused 220

CHAPTER XVII.

A PANIC ON THE DIGGINGS.

The first panic in the diamond market—Its causes—The present yield—The new Brazilian mine—Results of the panic—Prices offered—Two despondent diggers—No probability of fresh discoveries at present—Benefit these fields have wrought to Cape Colony—Question whether the utmost good has not now been extracted—Verification of my prophecy 228

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

DRIVEN BACK.

PAGE

Increasing activity of business men in the colony—A dust storm in Dutoitspan—Our Kaffirs run away—Our donkeys run away—Reports of intended action of the Commissioners—Grave irritation of the boer farmers—Monstrous stones found in Dutoitspan—Dinner off roast porcupine in a tornado—Endeavours to get a cart for Hopetown—Repeated disappointments—Borrow a "spider"—Driving down Bultfontein hill—Mr. Truter, late Free State Commissioner—His sentiments—Reach the Mod River—Find it impassable—The Drift canteen; its architecture, occupants, and business—Arrival of various parties—Mr. Truter tries the ford—Cooking our breakfast—Various excursions—The humours of the canteen—A flooded track—Astonishing effects of rain—Springboks—Our outhouse jumped by Tottie women—A second start—The Mod River ford fifty feet deep—Stoppage of the ferries at every point—Insulation of the camps—Continued agitation at New Rush—Suggestion of Vigilance Committees—Mr. Commissioner Thompson's conference with the diggers—His unanswerable arguments unanswerably refuted by force—Memorial to Sir H. Barkly—Another Hottentot maltreated . . 235

CHAPTER XIX.

LOST ON THE VELDT.

A third start—Pniel—Jardine's in desolation—Extraordinary ideas of the sub-inspector of Pniel—He carries them out—Discovery of a new digging on the river—My man George and his black brother—Gong-Gong—Delightful digging—A trader on the trek—Manner of seeking diamonds on the river—Returns of river digging compared with dry—I lose myself between Gong-Gong and Delport's Hope—How it happened—Reach Jantje's kraal—Offensive Kaffirs—The *Tompan*—A wretched awakening—Batlapin Christianity—Start again in a deluge—Meet a colony of Griquas—Their kindness—The veldt under water—A village of giants—The second night of our adventure—All the land a flood—Our horses give out—Another Batlapin village—The back trail stopped—The third night—Camping in a swamp, between rain and water—Provisions give out—Suffer from thirst—Catch sight of Campbell clearing far below—Mr. Bartlett's hospitality—The ruins of Kornelis Kok's great house—Mr. Bartlett's evidence—Both parties shirk an appeal to Adam Kok—A lovely spring—Leave Campbell—My spider breaks twice—Reach the Hook and cross over to Mr. Gers's 247

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

BACK TO THE FIELDS.

PAGE

The flood continues—The Orange River swollen thirty feet—Neglect of this stream as a water-way—What it would be in the East—The schemes proposed for transport — Railways, tramways, traction engines, elephants, camels—No one suggests using the rivers—Considerations on that subject — The railway schemes, their value—Necessity of a telegraph at once—Forty feet of flood in the river—Falling of the banks—Our house in danger—The water subsides—Hopetown in an ox-waggon—Prince Bismark's support of the Berlin Missionaries' claim—The reason of Waterboer's journey to Nomansland—Reports about it—Kaffir traders in Hopetown—Bad reports of trade—Story of a trader's supper—Twenty thousand pounds worth of diamonds lost on the veldt—Recklessness of Government in postal arrangements—Positive certainty of a great disaster from this cause—The Banks henceforth refuse to ensure diamonds—Belmont again—Jacobsdaal—An amusing crew at supper—Mr. Ascher—Major B. and his shadow—Chances of Major B.'s escape—He gives his shadow the slip and vanishes—Instant pursuit—Life in Jacobsdaal—The Mod River—A curious and striking scene—The fair on each bank—We get safely across—A child stuck in the mud—Bultfontein once more—My pet diamond split—The inspectors have again failed to send in their accounts—Money and reports due to proprietors are both four months' late—Worse state of things at New Rush—Coal from the Transvaal—Nine pounds weight of diamonds 263

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECOND NEWEST RUSH.

Another rush—The probabilities of its value—How diggers feel about new discoveries—The rich man's view, the poor man's—Great excitement—The carts all requisitioned—Messrs. S. buy the kopje provisionally—Best's kopje—changes at the old New Rush—The Leviathan digger, how he lives—Quantity of diamonds held back—Hospitality of New Rush—A visit to the claims—Signs of the end—Cutting away the roads—A funeral at New Rush; the hearse, the clergy, the mourners 281

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM BULTFONTEIN TO BELMONT.

The license money paid over by inspectors—Question of boundaries at James's Kopje—Mr. Fry's notice thereupon—The kopje claimed as

Digitized by Google

PAGE

English ground—Attacked by dogs—Mr. Justice Barry our guest—An awful sunset—Leave for Belmont—Our horses—I am reported to be the sheriff and hangman of Griqualand—The Komerings struck by lightning—Springbok—The rivers flooded—Farmer W. and his family—Camp by the river bank—A stroll beside the Mod—Fleas in the sand—Farmer W.'s experience in digging—Koopers and Boers—Barolong Kaffirs at the ford—Chasing the lively flea—Clockfontein—A painted house—Mysteries never to be revealed—Our horses begin their pranks—They continue—They conclude—Mr. Barnard of Honey-nest Kloof—Foot-gangers—Defence against them—Forest flies 291

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN AFRICAN FARMHOUSE.

Belmont; its scenery, house, garden, dams, and general pleasantness—Considerations on the matter of a bridge across the Orange—Appointment of the Land Commission—Eight grounds of title anticipated—A Russian Princess at the fields—Story of the eighty-eight carat diamond hawked round Klipdrift—To Pniel by transport waggon—Bultfontein again—Boy struck by lightning—My nine and a-half carat diamond splits—Supervision of the claims ordered at last—General flight of fraudulent diggers—Claims put up to auction—Story of the *Cambrian's* homeward voyage—Humours of the digging passengers—Fights, challenges, and alarms—Large diamonds . . 302

CHAPTER XXIV.

LIFE AT THE FIELDS.

Healthiness of the fields—Speculations as to the number of souls in Dutoitspan camp—In Bulfontein—Anxious look out—Increasing population and activity of trade—New roads, squares, and streets—Churches in Dutoitspan—Newspapers—The James Kopje rush a fiasco—Not a stone discovered—Messrs. Sonnenberg decline to purchase—A morning's employment in Bultfontein House—Varied duties—Another raid amongst the claims—I resolve to go home—Applications to us for a little sleep—Agitation at New Rush touching the stand licenses—Immense loss of landowners by the present system—They offer to grant leases—Refuse to grant a monthly license—Formation of a Mutual Defence Association amongst standholders—Threats of ejectment from proprietors—The diggers take part in the dispute—Their opinion upon general politics—The diggers' case, *pro* and *contra*, impartially stated—Renewed proceedings

Digitized by Google

PAGE

against the late rioters—The Crown at fault for want of evidence—Angry threats of the digging population—Increasing size of Dutoitspan camp — Boer women; their figures, faces, kopjes, and crinolines—Cost of living on the fields in February, 1872 . . . 314

CHAPTER XXV.

THE VELDT.

Another journey to Hopetown — Springbok — Meercats — Two species common—A third by the Hook—Their habits and appearance—My tame meercat "Diamond"—His voice and manners—A little fury—Thoughts about the veldt—Our English scenery, how different—The veldt has its own charm—The glory of grey magnitude—How the veldt appears to one born thereupon—A flight of locusts—Free State law — I bid good-bye to the fields — The question of further annexations 330

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

I start on the homeward journey — Sample of the contract service—Capsize of the up-waggon—Addison's farm—Kriepiet—Kalkekraal—Harnessing wild mules in the dark—Accidents and offences—Bring to for the night—Marmots and meercats—Schinderspan—Victoria again—Mr. Jackson's farm — The baby — It becomes necessary to bark at night—Devinish's farm—Beaufort—Fine trees—Large trade—The Gouff desert—Bombarding a farm-house—The Hex River kloof—Narrow escapes—A wine farm—Bain's kloof—Capetown—Home. 340

SUPPLEMENTARY. A.

ON SOME PECULIARITIES OF THE DIAMOND AS FOUND IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Difficulty in getting information about the Brazilian diamond mines—They seem to be river deposits—The same in India—Tavernier's evidence—The diamond now first found in its birth-place—No rivers to carry the diamonds to the dry fields—No evidence or possibility of floods there—Absence of the coat or skin upon Cape stones—Their superior crystallization—White stones always straight in their outline—Off-coloured, yellow, and coloured, always convex — "Fancy" stones straight as white ones—The splitting of gems—Incredulity of diamond merchants as to this feature of Cape stones — Practical demonstration—My own sad experience—Splitting diamonds in India

Digitized by Google

PAGE

—Shah Gehan's honesty—What sort of diamonds split—Various instances—The appearance of the split—Masonic marks upon diamonds—Deformities common at the Cape—Extraordinary varieties of deformity—"Carbonate" not found in the South African fields—The uses of carbonate—Cape "carbon"—Cape *bort* differs materially from Brazilian—Comparative worthlessness of Cape *bort*—Speculation founded on these various differences—The yield of diamonds in South Africa—The yield of New Rush, Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, and the River diggings—Quantities held back by our Leviathans . . 351

SUPPLEMENTARY. B.

PROSPECT OF THE DIAMOND FIELDS.

Fifty thousand diggers and the diggings all occupied—The old fields must be worked out by companies—How many diggers now pay their way—Business in danger of a glut—The economy of the colonial diggers and the boers—An instance of the way they work—Such diggers still three-fourths of the population—My own experience on the fields recapitulated—Price of diamonds at the diggings—Specimen advertisements of claims—The question of a falling off in the supply—The home market more satisfactory of late—Silent conspiracy of all interested to depreciate the yield—Figures adduced in support of the assertion—Examination of this evidence—The late robberies prove to be valueless—No prospect of new diggings—Valuable fields exist, but far in the interior—My opinion that the supply is as yet undiminished—An ugly prospect—The result foretold long since—Impossibility of sustaining prices under the present system—Immense ultimate benefit to the colony of these diggings 365

APPENDICES.

I. PROCLAMATIONS ANNEXING AND REGULATING THE TERRITORY GRIQUALAND WEST. 378

II. THE FREE STATE ORDINANCE FOR ADMINISTERING AFFAIRS UPON THE DIAMOND FIELDS 398

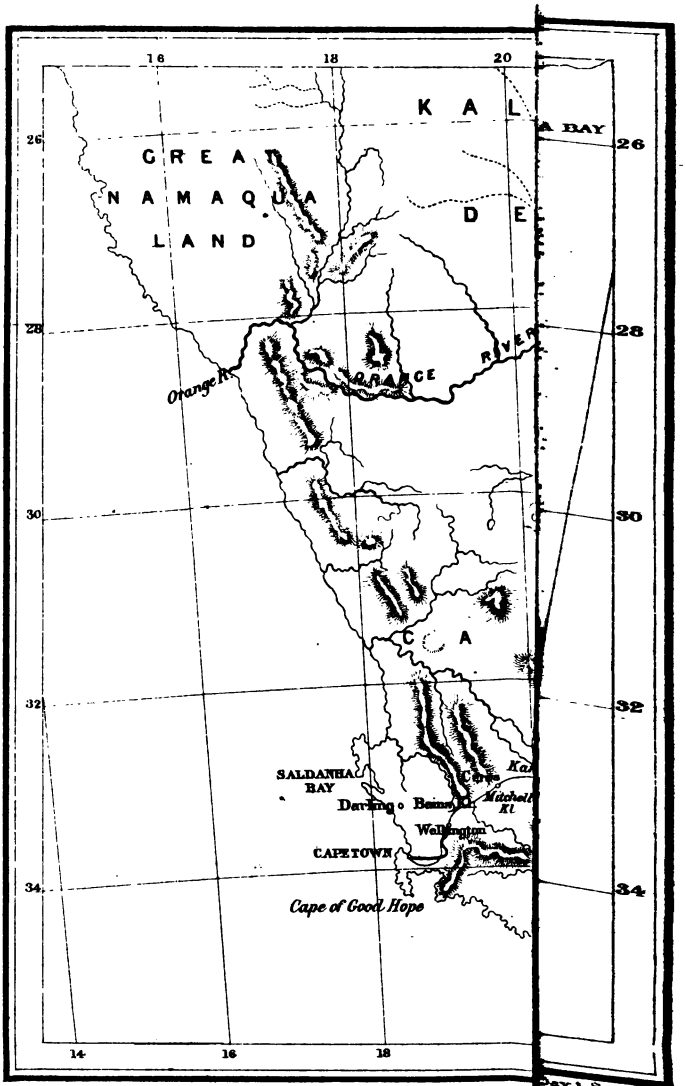
III. RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE DORSTFONTEIN (DUTOITSPAN) DIGGINGS 402

IV. THE SECOND NEW RUSH RIOTS 405

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

TO THE CAPE FOR DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER I.

THE VOYAGE OUT.

The Union Mail Company—Its steamer *Cambrian*—Evil prophecies—Madeira reached—An increasing list to port—Sudden change of course—Three hundred miles back to St. Helena—Another start—Loss of Mr. Frederick Vizetelly—The chief engineer again—Four watches of coal aboard, and seven hundred miles from land—Council of officers called at two A.M.—Running for the nearest land—Burning of spars, cables, and bridge—Commander Dyer, R.N., at the wheel—Terrible dangers and anxieties—Land at last—Saldanha Bay, seventy-two miles from Capetown.

NOT in any previous record of travel have I found it needful to devote more than one paragraph to the outward voyage. Being desperately tired myself of such descriptions, I have felt horror at the thought of boring my readers. But this journey to the Cape was so unusual—at least, I hope so—in its incidents and its termination, that I am bound to dwell on it at length. Former voyages from England were made under the tutelary care of the P. and O., or the Royal Mail. Given the starting of a vessel in these services, one takes its safe arrival at the appointed port for granted. With the Union line, an uncomfortable doubt overhangs this point. Strange events occur. The unexpected and the improbable are incidents of every day. One sails for Capetown from Madeira direct, and one touches at St. Helena; one pursues the voyage,

Digitized by Google

and Saldanha Bay receives the wayworn traveller. Such startling revolutions demand a narrative in explanation.

The Union Steam Ship Company has enjoyed the monopoly of this route since 1856. It has always been subsidised by Government in varying amounts. Just at present the figure stands at £20,000 per annum. Fearless of competition for an ungrateful traffic, it has demanded heavy freights, and has paid large dividends. The contract time for carrying the mails is most liberal—thirty-eight days; but again and again have its vessels incurred a fine, which never has been exacted. The directors of the Union Company, like other people, looked upon Cape Colony as a prey. Too poor, too distant, and too apathetic to protect its covenanted rights, British South Africa suffered all things and scarcely complained. The most incapable of all the mail fleet was the *Cambrian*, an old-fashioned boat of 868 tons burden, registered to carry a hundred and forty-seven passengers. So long ago as 1866, this vessel was laid up and dismissed the service for acknowledged defects. By what chain of circumstances it came to be once more commissioned, I do not know; but the old ship received us unfortunates aboard on September 25, 1871. It was no secret with those who had found time to make inquiries, that an evil prophecy was current in Southampton about this voyage. To all former defects of the *Cambrian*, bad trim, and shortness of coal now were added. Before I had been six hours on board, I heard these most uncomfortable reports, two of which were certainly correct. The company's agent at Southampton had bereft the vessel of 200 tons of fuel to make room for cargo of the lightest character, and she was thus reduced, independent of a dangerous loss in motive power, to a lightness absolutely incompatible with safety. Secondly, I heard that a colonial passenger who had spent some years at sea had forfeited his passage-money rather than embark, after surveying the appearance of things. And thirdly—but for this I cannot vouch—it was said that our Captain had formally protested to the agent against his reckless

Digitized by Google

withdrawal of coal, and had pronounced the ship unsafe. But these uncomfortable rumours only reached us when the English shore had faded out behind a mist of rain; nor, indeed, could my mission have been delayed for any reasonable risk.

Seventy passengers and fifty seamen had we on board, but for some days, a bare half-dozen of "ancient mariners" possessed the saloon. Heavy gales awaited us outside of Southampton water, and blew dead in our teeth all across the Bay of Biscay. That ill-omened gulf sustained its reputation. The sea like mountains towered, the sky was rent asunder, and other phenomena took place as it is written in the song. Though as yet ballasted with coal, we laboured heavily. I am no seaman, and I simply thought the weather very rough; but one could not fail to note that the sailor passengers—of whom we had several—stalked the empty decks with gloomy brow, and held dismal colloquy together. Land-lubbers, drenched and staggering, remarked their thoughtful looks, and pondered miserably. But, whatever might be feared or suspected by nautical onlookers—which, indeed, as I afterwards discovered, was simply foundering, or capsize, owing to the lightness of our trim—we safely traversed the peril, and cast anchor at length off Madeira, three days behind our time. From thence, after a few hours stay, we started, full of hope, for Capetown. This is a run of three weeks, under the best conditions, and a heavy load of coals was needful at Madeira, seeing we had started short by 200 tons. Unable to stow away the fuel in its proper place, it was stacked upon the deck, and any one can fancy how luxurious was life under such circumstances. All the ship had a black stain. The dust got into our very bones. It flavoured the soup, and marked our linen. It burned with the tobacco in our pipes, and worked itself in pretty patterns on the bread. Meanwhile, the spite of the elements was unappeased. It is not too much to say that only once had we a friendly breeze, six current hours, between Southampton and the Cape. Hour by hour the wretched *Cambrian* lost ground. Only in losing could she be

Digitized by Google

called a fast craft at any time, but this voyage she outdid herself. The old ship had all her work cut out to make five knots an hour. She plunged on, however, weary, but enduring.

It was about ten days after leaving Madeira that I became conscious to a very perceptible "list" to port. Our gallant craft, hour by hour, showed an increasing fancy for sailing on her port beam ends. I thought it odd; and I noticed, too, that the nautical passengers began to wear that careful aspect which had alarmed us in the Bay of Biscay. Something was wrong; for our seas ran tolerably smooth and very sunny, whilst the wind pushed us gently abeam. What it all meant we found out very suddenly. One melancholy night, not the first we had had by many on this most incredible of voyages, nor the last, those who chanced to be awake about four A.M. became aware of a blessed calm. It was October 23rd, our twenty-eighth day out. In a moment came the change. We pitched no more; we lifted our head; we proudly rode the seas. Then followed, in the second moment, a piping as of four-and-twenty blackbirds in a fairy pie. "Setting sail it is!" we wakeful ones exclaimed, and rushed on deck in costumes varied but elementary. A glance around, a hurried observation of the compass, exposed the mystery: we had changed our course from S. by E. to W.N.W. "Steering for St. Helena!" was the cry of all those white-clad passengers on the dim, wet deck. "And what on earth for?" was the next question—a very natural one, and containing the reason for this chapter. Mail steamers usually know where they are going to, and don't stampede suddenly for a new destination at four o'clock in the morning. The *Cambrian* is an exception to this as to other rules. We were left in the dawn to ask ourselves a nightmare question; but by breakfast time the official explanation passed around. An error of some scores of tons in the coal account necessitated a visit to St. Helena. Reserving for the moment all remark upon the system under which such an error could be possible, it must be added that another cause of equal weight had its effect. The ship was

Digitized by Google

riding so light, with the list to port growing daily more serious, our captain did not dare to face such winds as hang around the Cape. We rolled this way and that at will of sea and breeze; so the officers' hearts failed them, and we put *back* three hundred miles to St. Helena for coals and ballast.

Now a word about the chief engineer, who was responsible for this vagary. In every other steam vessel this personage is an officer presentable at least, often well educated, and a gentleman. Our chief engineer of the *Cambrian* was not, and did not profess to be anything of the sort. He did not dine in the saloon, and associated neither with officers nor passengers. So far as I saw, he never spoke to any one unless on business, excepting with the stewards. He passed his time off duty playing cards and gossiping with them in his cabin. Well, but if the man had been a stoker of genius, who had taught himself to fulfil the responsible duties of his post, we should have respected him all the same. It was not so. Is it a fact that this man had risked another ship belonging to the line, through the grossest miscalculation of the coal account? Officers of the Union line have told me that only the watchfulness and decision of his subordinate saved a former boat in which he served from a fix much worse than ours off Vigo.

The faces of those on board, to whom time was of importance, were very long at breakfast. Betting on the day of arrival in Capetown went up into the forties, and it was they who knew most about sea matters who backed the highest number. I doubt whether any date under fifty would have found takers in the forecastle. On the 25th, however, one calendar month from England, we safely reached St. Helena. Of course I am not going to write one word of description about that island. We enjoyed ourselves greatly, after thirty days of prison, with more than the average chance of drowning. It was given out, on the authority of the chief engineer, that we had 106 tons of coal yet aboard. With this assurance, the captain reasonably felt safe in taking

Digitized by Google

60 more tons of fuel and 30 tons stone ballast; but for some cause the programme was changed at the last moment. Having run thus far with such conspicuous good fortune as to have lost only six days of the extravagant mail time, it was plainly quite the reasonable thing to back our luck for the remaining voyage. So we shipped 83 tons of coal instead of 60, and shelved the matter of ballast. In the evening, off again, wind dead against us, of course. Making great noise and fuss, but doing preciously little work, we laboured along, upon beam ends almost, for want of the stone neglected. On the night of November 1, occurred the crowning misfortune of our luckless journey. That night there had been an entertainment on board, such as is got up during long voyages, with small ostentation but great good-will on all hands. After it was over, we had dancing on the poop, the captain gave a supper, and so it chanced that every one was very late that night. The poop had been hung round and roofed with flags, so as to make a room of it, gaudy with coloured bunting. At half-past three o'clock some passengers, myself among the number, had not yet turned in. All the watch but a single quartermaster were engaged in taking down the decorations of our ball-room. I was seated in the second officer's cabin half asleep. Suddenly on the stillness of the night came a single shriek, "Murder!" The fore-saloon passengers had enjoyed their share of the amusements afoot, and I thought it probable the cry was mere horse-play on their part. Stepping lazily outside, I stumbled against a frightened sailor rushing past with the dreadful shout, "Man overboard!" upon his lips. In the still night, along the deserted deck, that cry rang into every ear. A passenger in the foresaloon ran against me. "It's Mr. Vizetelly," he cried, "fallen over from the forecastle." "Who saw him?" "No one." I hastily assured myself the poor fellow was not anywhere forward, and then ran aft. The engineers had stopped, and a ghastly silence dwelt in our ears. After thirty-five days' clank and rattle, stillness seemed a positive condition.

Digitized by Google

On the quarter-deck nearly every man aboard was standing, or restlessly moving from group to group. Some of the flags still stretched in their places, barring the moonbeams, and throwing lines of shadow over us pale and white-clad passengers. Behind the wheel they were already cleared away. Through the gap we saw a stately vista of smooth, long swells rolling beneath a tropic moon. A boat was passing astern. We could but wait its coming back, asking questions none could answer, whispering and wondering. The performance of the evening had been an imitation of the Christy Minstrels, and Mr. Vizetelly one of the troupe. At the ball which followed most of the performers still wore their paint; it was not yet washed off—eyes filled with anxiety and sudden horror glistened strangely from the blackened brows. Nothing more terribly grotesque could be witnessed than the group that leaned across the taffrail to await the returning boat—it was empty!

Our lost comrade was Mr. Frederick Vizetelly, a name well known in literary circles. He, like all his brothers, had been connected with the illustrated press. How the accident came about none can tell. In the course of the day past he had asked a sailor at what time the moon would stand right overhead. "About four o'clock," the man replied; and Mr. Vizetelly replied he would come up to admire the sight. Possibly it was with that intention he had climbed the forecastle steps, at the top of which he was seen for the last time aboard. The fore-saloon passenger who had spoken to me saw him so standing as he himself went down the companion. Before he reached the bottom stair the cry, "Man overboard," rang out. In less than a second after Mr. K—— saw the poor fellow—he must have gone over. The forward watch, as I have said, were taking down the flags astern; the solitary look-out left did not chance to be about the spot. From the quartermaster at the wheel first came the warning. Only the doctor, myself, and another passenger had noticed poor Vizetelly's scream as he went over. The quartermaster at the

Digitized by Google

wheel heard a gurgling sound, scarce human, on the port beam, and, on looking out, saw the lost man floating past. He threw the life-buoy instantly, and raised a shout, gave up his charge to the first seaman running up, sprang into the starboard boat with two comrades. He was pulling back within three minutes of the alarm. Engineers and seamen were equally quick on this occasion. All possible means of saving our hapless comrade were employed, and with the utmost speed.

Morning came upon us whilst we discussed the terrible event, and with the morning breeze a renewal of our anxieties. The list to port became once more perceptible, though not to be explained. Thursday and Friday passed away. On Saturday morning came the last and most startling of our many surprises. About two A.M. the chief engineer became audible again; he woke up our captain with the pleasing news that his "bunkers" contained coal sufficient for four watches—that is to say, sixteen hours—pleasant information at seven hundred miles from port, in a ship which dared not carry sail! It seems, our chief engineer had made a second error in his accounts. Instead of 106 tons aboard at the time of our arrival at St. Helena, he had but 70 tons. It follows that we left the island with some 40 tons less than was reckoned. Nor is this all; for he had been burning, or losing, 19 tons per diem, whilst demanding only 15 tons. The man had actually, as was discovered, burnt his coal without using the "measures." At the council of officers which was summoned at this untimeous hour, only one opinion ruled: we must needs run for the nearest land! The course was shifted, the vessel put at half speed, and away we steamed against a strong south-easter. Meanwhile, the chief engineer was suspended. Next day a panic ruled. Not even the officers—who showed most creditable pluck and countenance—could deny that our situation was critical. From earliest daylight every man aboard was invited to assist—first-class passengers handled axe, and saw, and rope. A captain of the Royal navy doffed his coat, and took the wheel. Every

Digitized by Google

sailor was employed in the after hole, digging down amongst baggage and cargo for the reserve of coal stored there. This was at length brought up, after terrible toil and confusion; it amounted to two days' provision.

We could not hope to make land in so slow a ship, against half a gale of wind, on this supply. Fuel must be had. The great "coir" springs, which had been lashed along the bulwarks to protect us from the sea, were drawn on deck, and cut in lengths. Spars and timber were overhauled, and all that could be spared was sawn to pieces. We cut down all the bridge, and broke it up. Surveys of the deck-house had to be made, in spite of protests from all of us who slept there. Whispers touching the cabin-doors passed round, and the ladies were much too frightened to cry out; and as each supply of fuel was discovered it was cast into the furnaces.

Such a Saturday and Sunday may I never pass again! It seems to me now, looking back at the time, we were weeks in our perilous position. We did not dare even hoist the jibs. Our hearts were in our mouths every five minutes. A sort of pendulum was made, and hung upon a door of the smoking-room to mark the angle of our incline to port. I should be afraid to say the dip on Saturday, when we staggered on, utterly helpless, rolling from side to side. During Sunday our level was a slope between twelve degrees and thirteen degrees; several times we lurched to twenty-five degrees. Let any one attempt to stand on a plank at that angle, and he will faintly realise the pleasure of locomotion on our ship. The *Captain* turned over at twenty-two degrees, I think. From noon of Saturday to noon of Sunday we made thirty miles, leaving one hundred and fifty to the nearest point of Africa. It was manifestly hopeless to expect we could reach it under steam. A council of officers was called, and our nautical fellow-passenger attended it. There were two courses open—one, to lie by, and hope to intercept the *Syria*, which might be hourly expected; the other, to hoist sails, or jibs, at least, and risk what

Digitized by Google

might befall. Fancy what was our state when not an officer could dare to recommend the second course! These gentlemen knew—at least, as well as anybody—the dangers of our position. They knew that our fuel was vanishing hour by hour, that the wind might be expected to rise, that the chance of being seen by the *Syria* was almost desperate. Our tanks were dry, and rusty; with the last load of fuel the condensers would cease producing the daily supply of water. Some of our wines and liquors had already given out. It was said that the preserved meats could not be expected to last much longer. And yet, for all these things—and greater dangers still, to them confided—no one would take the responsibility of advising sail. Our fellow-passenger took advantage of his high reputation in the navy, formally to relieve the officers of this onus. Speaking as an officer of the royal service, Captain Dyer bade them set the jibs, and about noon on Sunday it was done. We heeled over another degree or so; but the rolling which had so alarmed us ceased. There had actually been some fear amongst the sailors that the engines might break loose under such a strain.

So the old *Cambrian* rode steady, and got along at a rate of two to three knots the hour. There was no church service that Sunday. People seemed too frightened to think of it. Towards evening, the breeze freshened to half a gale, but steady blowing, without squalls. One of such puffs as daily ripple across these seas might—some said *must*—have overset us. As things were, a man could neither stand nor sit upon the benches in the deck-house. Again and again we smokers slipped, tumbling from our seats altogether, against the leeward wall in a heap. At midnight the officer of the watch struck his jibs. The strong wind sent her along on beam-ends. Quite quietly, during the previous night, the boats had been looked to, filled with water, and prepared for use. To-night, without noise or fuss, kegs were fitted in, and provisions stored. Few undressed. In the event of a capsize, it was generally believed there might be twenty minutes or half an

Digitized by Google

hour's chance remaining to those who should not be smothered in their cabins. To secure this hope, so far as might be, many spent the bitter night on deck.

Monday came to us with the contrary breeze usual in the morning. We had missed the latitude of St. Helena Bay, our course indeed being ridiculously at the caprice of wind and sea. Holding on to the S.E., it was supposed we might reach Saldanha Bay, a harbour something more than seventy miles from Capetown. The day was one of peril and desperate anxiety, for all that land lay in sight. All sorts of little trouble followed our greater cares. The wine supply began to fail; scarce an article of crockery remained on board. Every moment our fuel waned, and deck-house and cabin doors must certainly be burnt within twenty-four hours. We had indeed wakened to a smoother sea and fuller wind. At breakfast-time, the welcome "Land Ho!" rang from aloft. How eagerly we crowded to the bows to see that blessed shade on the horizon! Smoother grew the sea, softer the wind each hour. The pale grey line reared itself in sky. We gradually made out the dividing shade between dun water and colourless land. Pale hills appeared, yellow in foreground, violet grey in distance. Then a white belt of sand glistened into view. Cliffs rose like mighty portals—a dull green surge of sea the road between. Sorely staggering and weary we trod that path. The nakedness of a barren and uncomely land lay exposed before us. Our destination still ungained, we were flying for mere life and shelter to an unpeopled desert. But not the Paradise of Scripture, nor the palaces of Islam, could have been more grateful to us despairing.

On the afternoon of Monday, November 6, on the forty-second day out from Southampton, the Union mail steamer, *Cambrian*, took refuge in Saldanha Bay, with 5 cwt. of fuel, or one-thirtieth part of a day's consumption, aboard. Her reserve was used, her cables, bridge, spars, burnt; her tanks dry; her food running short.

Digitized by Google

And let me tell here something more terrible still. We left Southampton with a flaw in our screw shaft, so well known, and so seriously feared by the superintendent of the company, that he actually put on board a *spare shaft*, to be fixed in place at Table Bay. Here be a fine calculation, gentlemen directors! It was estimated, with marvellous precision, that the damaged engine could be trusted as far as Capetown, but not for the return voyage. It is terribly admirable to observe how nice was the calculation. In the Bay of Biscay, the split increased two feet in length, and began to tear across; yet we reached Saldanha Bay in safety! These are mathematics with a vengeance! I would I had the nerve of that gentleman who figured out the sum, and risked a hundred and fifty human lives on the accuracy of his conclusion.

If you think me warm, reader, fancy yourself one of those hundred and fifty. You will then make allowances.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

SALDANHA BAY TO CAPETOWN.

I desert the *Cambrian* with two friends—Spirited offer of Mr. Doveton—Vanderbyl's store—Mr. Albertyne and his house—Antelopes—Scenery round Saldanha Bay—Agricultural prospects and methods—The character of a dam—of a boer farmhouse—Appearance and habits of the boer—Homestead laws—Darling—Mamre—Dangerous drive—Mossul-bank Bridge—Moving sand-hills—Capetown.

AND thus, after forty-two days' voyage, we were cast upon the welcome shore. Saldanha Bay has few charms for the landsman's eye. The sailor points with admiration to its winding coves, its bleached sea-wall of hills, its tremulous expanse of azure waves. There is a harbour, saith he, for the world's fleets to ride in! His enthusiasm is well merited, no doubt. Any stupid can conceive the virtues of the spot when the wild south-easter rages out at sea. But, as a mere matter of fact, Saldanha Bay is almost useless where it lies. Could that tutelary goddess who has South Africa in charge transport this haven to the other shore, what mighty interests would spring up round it, what population would invade its solitudes! But on the western coast its merits are quite lost and thrown away. The districts it might drain of trade are almost deserts. Namaqualand produces nought but copper, feathers, and a few hides of game. The inland commerce, which now goes to Capetown, would not easily be diverted, nor prove of much value in any case. Such is the poor return of agriculture round the bay, and such the difficulties of transport, it does not even pay to export produce to the neighbouring Capetown. Only poor prisoners detained in quarantine keep up a fitful animation on its shores.

Digitized by Google

Saldanha Bay is out of place, but not a bit more so than were we, invaders of its peace, cast up there by the avenging gods, *en route* for Capetown.

For my own part, I had long since decided that the *Cambrian* was no vessel for a prudent man to linger in. If we had gone ashore in latitude of Timbuctoo I think I would have made an effort to proceed by land. Ashore, and on his feet, an old campaigner is bound to push forward somehow, and, at the worst, he commonly knows what next may be expected. But on board that desperate craft, one felt never sure of one hour's progress; and no prophet since Habakkuk, I should hope, would venture to predict what the next move might be. So, being in a hurry, I was resolved to trust no more the faithless promises upon my ticket. Alone or accompanied, I would set off overland. One fellow-passenger shared my views, and at the latest moment another joined us. So about three P.M. we devoted ones went blithely down the gangway, and stepped into the boat in waiting to convey the third officer ashore. Mr. Doveton had volunteered to ride seventy-two miles on horseback through the night, bearing the news of our situation, and asking help. We got up sail, and skimmed the blue waves merrily. The bay of Naples has not brighter water nor a clearer sky. Our shadows fell as keen, as still; but when the land was neared, it showed a scene too much contrasting with the brilliant colours of sweet Capri. The islands that we passed were heaps of stones piled up like cairns; through their interstices a few thin plants struggled upwards to the light. In front a belt of snowy sand bounded the deep-blue waves, and over it, crowning the slope, a dun, burnt line of vegetation showed itself. We turned the corner of a low-lying island, and the solitary store of Mr. Vanderbyl came into view. Two or three boats lay moored beneath it, and a net was stretched between some posts. A yellow-flowering bush—some sort of cassia, I take it—stood before the door. On one side was a store-shed, and the other a low, round hut or two, built of willows, like a beehive, and roofed

Digitized by Google

with filthy skins. No other habitation in sight. Whilst we rapidly neared the shore, four horses pranced along the beach, drawing a two-wheeled vehicle somewhat like a tax-cart, but hung lower on the axle, and desperately lacking paint. Therein, upright as an ancient charioteer, stood a tall, fair, slender fellow, with reins in one hand, and in the other a whip of monstrous length. He scarcely glanced at us, but drove his team in excellent fashion up to Meinheer's door, jumped out, and tied the ribbons to the wheel. We beached the boat, and followed. All the sand was strewn with young sharks, dead and withered. At this spot must have been a great massacre of the innocents belonging to that charming family.

I may dismiss Mr. Vanderbyl's store and its contents by the simple observation that every possible necessity of human existence could be satisfied there. All sexes, ages, creeds, nations, and languages would find in this spot what they need. I don't say much of superfluities or luxuries; but in some dark corner not a little of this sort of thing might even be discovered. Nor could I conscientiously applaud the quality of the wares displayed. It is a truth which Cape merchants are the first to acknowledge that no good thing is found within their boundaries, so long has this colony been a by-word for all that is poverty-stricken. The flawed, the damaged manufactures, the salvage of fire and wreck, the cheap and nasty scrapings of all the world's products, have been the chosen articles of Cape trade. But if we have not yet changed all this, we are now making rapid progress in the revolution—and to diamonds is the improvement owing.

At the store we made acquaintance with the Jehu who had passed so furiously. He gave us a favourable impression of the Africander, which experience, unfortunately, did not confirm. We straightway plunged into a bargain with this pleasant fellow for conveying us to Capetown. Pending the ratification of preliminaries, which we left to the experience and patience of Mr. W——, it was given us to taste "Cape smoke." When I say that this

Digitized by Google

liquid did not give us nausea, bile, pains in the chest, back, and limbs, and aversion to female society, upon the spot, that will be sufficient evidence how utterly unlike to all known liquors is this home-made brandy. I will confess that I even had a relish for it in this first essay. It was not until the palate had grown used to the most abnormal of flavours, that the mere sight and smell of Cape brandy produced on me, as on others, a feeling of hatred towards the whole human race, and a wish that I never had been born. I think I actually tasted the concoction three times—the last occasion under *force majeure*. No description of its sickly, poisonous smell is possible. He who would know must try.

Mr. Doveton's business was soon settled. Horses and Hottentots are the last thing a colonist falls short in. We saw him start upon a small active nag about five P.M., and then took up with redoubled interest the broken thread of our negotiations with Mr. Albertyne. It was at length agreed that he should supply us with four horses, and drive us as far as Darling, for £3, and, seeing he possessed no vehicle besides the Roman chariot outside, it was further covenanted with Mr. Vanderbyl that we should have his pretty cart for the same distance at the cost of another sovereign. This arranged, we left our captain bargaining for an ox, at the rate of £7, or less, and started in the cart for Mr. Albertyne's farm, where we were to stop the night. Turning off from the sea beach, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, we drove up a narrow track, much worn by rain torrents, and reached the dun, burnt downs. They rolled away, in alternate slope and furrow, as far as the eye could see. No sign of house or cultivation broke the lonely prospect; not a tree gave shade, nor brooklet ran, nor patch of grass lent hue of brighter green. All the vegetation was low heath, growing in little clumps upon the sand, like knots of wool upon a negro's head. At a distance these poor bushes made a sheet of dullest olive tone; but when one approached, a patch of pale-red sand displayed itself between the

Digitized by Google

tufts. In these sad solitudes is still an abundance of game. *Duykers* and *blesbok* and other antelopes feed up to the very farm doors, and only six miles away are *hartebeests*, and I know not what besides. Partridges, quail, *corans*, and *paaw*—both of them species of bustard—are as common as well could be; but we were so rarely unfortunate as to meet not a single buck in our half hour's drive, and were thus led hastily to draw suspicions most unfounded.

Our host was the great-grandson of a French refugee, driven into exile by the revocation of the Nantes edict. A very considerable number of the wealthier Huguenots made their way to the Cape at that period, and their descendants still people large tracts of country. The neighbourhood of Saldanha Bay was one of these French colonies, and the farmers' names—though ridiculously corrupted in some instances—still bear the memory of their origin. Albertyne, Vasson, Villiers—pronounced Fillje; Beaujean—pronounced Bean—are amongst those that caught my ear. The bearers, however, differ in no respect from the boers of true Dutch birth. With our friend's grandfather had died out all knowledge of the French tongue, and although Mr. Albertyne was not ignorant of his origin, he disclaimed any feeling whatsoever, good or bad, towards the land of his ancestors, owning, with a laugh, that the issue of the late war had been one of the events within his limited knowledge of history in which he felt the least interest. So soon may our little conceit of country die out! But I would not willingly lose a pleasant faith that the genial manners of our host, so different from those usual in his class, were due to this strain of Gallic blood.

Farmer Albertyne dwelt, with thirteen unmarried sisters, in a substantial house, walled of large unburned bricks, and roofed of camel-thorn. It had only a ground-floor, and the rooms were unceilinged, but there appeared to be almost sufficient room for even a baker's dozen of young ladies. The front door, which had before it a *stoop* or raised pavement of flat stones, opened directly

Digitized by Google

on the living room, a spacious apartment, floored with pounded ants' nests, and fresh smeared each day with cow-dung. It was open to the roof; two windows of fair size lighted it. The furniture was good, and even comfortable, though not abundant in quantity. A large table stood in the centre, and half-a-dozen solid chairs round it, these of unpolished wood. A bureau of the same class was placed opposite the door, bearing a Bible and two or three old books in Dutch, whereof the contents did not appear to be of great interest or congruity. Round the unpapered walls hung a few cheap sporting prints. Two bed-rooms led from this saloon on either hand, and on the hind wall was the kitchen-door. The farmer's *roer*, a clumsy old rifle, but one to do desperate execution, leaned in the corner. I have been thus particular in describing the appearance of Mr. Albertyne's house, because it may be taken as a type of those in the older and wealthier parts of the colony. When we get further north and east there will be need for another description.

The outbuildings of the farm stood behind. Passing beneath the shade of three fine young gum-trees, we come upon a *kraal*, or fold, fenced in with thorns, and containing a numerous herd of sheep. They had not much to boast of in the matter of breeding, but their numbers quite surprised us. Amongst them were many of the old Dutch stock, distinguished by their horns and monstrous tail. Some dragged behind them an appendage eight inches in diameter, and eighteen inches long, a solid mass of fat. This is a substitute for butter, much used by the wilder farmers. It is also employed for all domestic purposes. Two or three little Hottentots, with yellowest of skins, flattest of noses, and obliquest eyes, were patiently squatted at the head of a long file of cows, tied up to the kraal fence. The word was given to milk, and straightway these ill dairy-maids began a fight with the jealous calves. Butting and scrambling, lowing and swearing, calves and men struggled for the udder, whilst the milky mothers now and again added a musical bass note, or kicked, indiscrimi-

Digitized by Google

nately, at each intruder. The idea in those parts is, that a cow will not yield milk if her calf be taken from her. Further on was a shed where two or three pet horses had a lodging, and there was a cart and a waggon, goats and fowls, and other common objects of a farm.

I was in dread lest all the thirteen sisters should be presented one by one, and had called up the principles of the Memoria Technica to aid me in remembering their names. But only two put in an appearance, and very pleasantly hospitable were they, though innocent of the English tongue. At an early hour we turned into our bed-room, and made excellent shift with the accommodation there provided. Before dawn next day a little Tottie girl brought coffee, the horses were inspanned, and off we set along a scarce distinguishable tract, that crossed the *veldt*, or open country. The team was fresh—something more than that, a nervous person might describe it—but our host had been driving all his life long, and six unbroken horses to handle would not have discomposed his nerve. It was still pitch dark when we started, and all the magnificent display of African dawn unrolled itself before us. When the scene became visible, it was but a repetition of that passed overnight—mountains in distance, long, dull sandy plains, low scrub of heaths; but, after a time, though the soil noway improved, the heaths began to grow taller, and to break into bloom. Presently we found ourselves in a country where they flourished like high bushes, tall as a man on foot, and then all the barren tract became a sheet of varied blossom, pyramids of snow or rose-colour bordered the path, clumps of cassia and wild camomile shone like golden hillocks, low-creeping ice-plants sprinkled stars of yellow and crimson beneath our wheels, a thousand bulbous roots bore flowers of every colour. Never in any land or zone have I beheld such a garden. The savannahs of Tropical America have no such variety, the forest glades of Borneo such masses; and I am told the best season for flowers is past! Imagination fails to picture what these solitudes must be

Digitized by Google

when at their loveliest. But there was no sound heard, even at this early hour, except the monotonous cry of the big grasshoppers; a few buck showed themselves at a distance, passing from clump to clump; lizards were in plenty, quaint little fellows, with pink body and cerulean head; partridges and rabbits got up before us, and leisurely paced back a yard or so. Verily, South Africa is the sportman's paradise.

Mr. Albertyne farms about six hundred acres of ground—a space not big enough to turn in, as his *confrères* up country would declare. Of this small heritage, about one half is under culture. Rotation of crops is an unknown science here. What could they "rotate?" There is no demand for anything but maize and corn; nor is it worth while to send even that to Capetown. Flour can be imported as cheap from America. So half his land always lies fallow, and on it he turns down the fat-tailed sheep. Farmers have many complaints here as elsewhere. The land, even though virgin, is not rich; no one, in fact, could suppose it fit for any purpose at all, regarding its sandy, sterile surface. Twenty to twenty-five fold is the greatest yield to be expected. There is no manuring, of course, and no irrigation in these parts. The seasons, too, are variable, and the rainfall insufficient. Sometimes there comes a deluge; but the omnipresent fear is of a drought. The greatest and worst of the farmer's misfortunes, however, is the want of a market; it will not pay him to transport his scanty crop to Capetown. He must sell it to a middleman at a trifling price, who, when he has bought up the produce of the district, will carry it away in a coaster. Sheep do extremely well in this neighbourhood; but the farms are too small for pasture, and, to enter that line of business, under existing circumstances, would demand both capital and energy. Possessing neither one nor other, our farmers rub along, with very few shillings in their pocket, but abundance of food and health. Supposing one knew not what ambition means, nor luxury, nor interest in any mundane thing, one might lead an easy existence on these conditions.

Digitized by Google

About eight o'clock we reached Vasson's farm, and pulled up to bait in the midst of a scene quite patriarchal. All the plain before the house was white with sheep and lambs, drinking at the "dam" and in long troughs. The "dam" I shall often have need to mention; it is the most indispensable feature of a farm. In a country where springs are almost unknown, and where the rainfall, though very violent, is not long continued, where a river is a prodigy, and a brook actually non-existent, where the fine, hard sand throws off the water almost like a rock, reservoirs are a pressing necessity. The settler looks round for a hollow space, through which the surface drainage is accustomed to run off. The valley between two slopes is the best situation, when available. Having chosen the most suitable spot, he harnesses the oxen to his plough, and breaks up the ground immediately beyond the natural bank of the hollow. This deepened as much as may be, he builds a solid wall of earth, faced with pebbles, along the further side the trench, continuing it at each side as far as is required. The shallower end of the slope, by which the drainage enters, needs no wall, of course. These things accomplished by the labour of his Hottentots, there is nothing more to do but sleep till the dam be gradually filled. The accumulating weight is partly broken by the natural bank, left untouched, and thus a bulwark somewhat fragile will bear a very large sheet of water—in fact, it is a rare thing for a dam to burst. I met with two or three ruins of the sort, but they showed an overvaulting ambition. The great reservoir of Victoria, which broke some years ago, and did much mischief, was on a scale unreasonable for such simple engineering. But though catastrophes of the sort do not often occur, the dam needs constant attention. There is a fresh-water crab in many parts which causes incessant mischief; its pastime is to burrow the walls, for some purpose unknown. Laboriously does it pursue the work, until some fine day down crashes wall and water, and the astonished crab finds itself cracked like a walnut in the turmoil. The cost of making a dam varies very

Digitized by Google

much; but two shillings the foot may be something like a basis for calculation.

His dam finished, the emigrant farmer—who is living in his waggon all this time—proceeds to make bricks. This is the simplest of operations. Having discovered a sort of soil that shows some dim and faint resemblances to clay, he duly puddles it with water from the dam, and shapes it into big square forms, about a foot each way, and six inches thick. A sufficiency of these collected and sun-dried, he enters into treaty with a builder, of which craft there are itinerant professors. In due time the dwelling is run up—a simple cottage generally, with two, or, at most, three rooms on the ground-floor. The kitchen place is just a dome of wattle and mud, behind the house. A coat of paint and whitewash is daubed over all, and the farmer enters into possession. No thought has he of sheds or folds. Ornament never occurs to him as possible or worthy of desire. The melancholy garden where he grows some poor potatoes and a fragrant onion, lies in a hollow below the dam. All stark and staring stands the house, upon a ridge. For miles round you can see it, one white dingy patch in the discoloured landscape. Therein he drones away his life, sleeping from one to four each day, and eight to three each night. But one sleeping room has he—if in a house newly built—for all the family, containing, perhaps, two beds. These are occupied by the elders, and the rest—half-a-dozen grown boys and girls, perhaps—pig it on mattresses, or on the skin-strewed floor. It is a marvel to one who watches the rustic life how any work at all gets itself done. The Hottentots, whom our farmer uses so roughly, must be excellent servants, for everything is left to them. But it is no marvel at all that hideous revelations of family crime are sometimes opened by the courts of law. The ancient houses, like Mr. Albertyne's, are vastly superior to the modern in all respects.

Mr. Vasson—who will certainly never hear or read these lines of mine—was monstrously big and stout, as are nine in ten of

Digitized by Google

the farmers, whether French or Dutch or English by descent. I think this race of men is the heaviest and largest in the world. It is certainly the biggest I have encountered in a life of travel. Picked western men of America might match them in height, but in bulk and weight they would be left behind. I am quite sure that the average of the fifty thousand grown men in Cape Colony would be very close on six feet. It is a common thing to find a half-dozen sons in a family, each of them two or three or four inches above this level. And their breadth of shoulder, girth of limbs and body, and muscular development, are more striking still. At an early age, however, their drowsy habits and copious feeding run them into flesh. I did not notice many instances of excessive fat, but every man over thirty was twice the thickness he should be for health. Three times a day the family gorges itself upon lumps of mutton, fried in the tallowy-fat of the sheep's tail. Or else—their only change of diet—upon the tasteless *fricadel*, kneaded balls of meat and onions, likewise swimming in grease. Very few vegetables they have, and those are rarely used. Brown bread they make, but scarcely touch it. Fancy existing from birth to death upon mutton scraps, half-boiled, half-fried in tallow! So doth the boer. It is not eating but devouring with him. And fancy the existence, always alone with one's father, mother, brothers, and sisters, of whom not one can do more than write his name, scarce one can read, not one has heard of any event in history, nor dreamed of such existing things as art or science, or poetry, or aught that pertains to civilisation. I swear that one who has seen such lives actually passing before him, feels more difficulty in crediting his eyes than he who should but speculate about them. All the year through there's nought before the sight except the changing seasons on the lonely veldt. No hope has the farmer of wealth. His utmost ambition would be to pay ancestral debts that cumber all his land. Of this he has no expectation, and for it he makes no effort. So long as the interest be punctual, there is small

Digitized by Google

danger of foreclosing. The mortgagor is probably as listless as himself. He has inherited the debt with other property, and is not more careful of that than of the rest. Sleep and ignorance possess the land. Your Cape boer is the Rip van Winkle of the world.

But I wander from Mr. Vasson. He made us welcome in a drowsy way, giving to each a flabby grasp as of a boneless giant. His house was but a cottage of two rooms, such as I have described. A little old dame, whose neatness and whose cheerful ways told of Capetown habits, poured us out coffee. These Vassons had outdistanced the Albertynes in the race of life, I take it, for, whilst living in a house so very much inferior, the actual Mr. Vasson had a farm many times larger. I understood that he or his ancestors had absorbed the corners of their property, as one might say. For the ancient law of Cape Colony, in reference to public lands, was thus—a settler could obtain three thousand *morgen*, or something more than six thousand acres, round the spot where he chose to build the homestead. He was not obliged to take so much; but, whatever the size of the farm might be, it must be circular in shape. Thus it follows from Euclid, since the circumference of a property could touch the adjoining grant only in one place, there were immense tracts of land left waste between. The jealousy of the Dutch East India Company, ever fearful of conspiracies and rebellion, caused this curious regulation. It is still the law of the land, but many farmers have silently appropriated, in later times, the vacant corners, paying rent for them when discovered, or enjoying the venial fraud in peace when suffered to do so. Mr. Vasson had large tracts of land under corn—wheat, that is, at some distance from the house. Careless enough his agriculture seemed to be, and poor the crop, but it was a pleasanter sight than the everlasting, dreary veldt. For we had left the flowers behind again long before we reached Darling.

This is a nice little village. It has a church of neat appear-

Digitized by Google

ance, and the roads are bordered with young trees. There may be a hundred or so of inhabitants; but I would not hastily give an opinion on the number. Each little house stands by itself, with a *stoop* in front, and a couple of thriving trees at either side. Then there are hedges of pomegranate and willow, and, in short, a general greenness, which our English eyes had already missed. Here we dined, and dismissed Mr. Albertyne and the borrowed cart. The landlord of the tiny inn undertook to forward us from hence to Capetown for the sum of £5 10*s*. About two o'clock we got off, with a team of four tolerable horses. Mamre, a mission station of the Dutch church, was the next settlement. This is the brightest oasis we were destined to see in South Africa. It lies buried in trees of mighty growth, and has dikes of running water all about. Neat walls and hedges fence the church and parsonage, and a pleasant glow of flowers shines above them. The cottages too, though built of mud, had a respectable and cleanly look. I am well aware what bitter feeling against mission stations is prevalent at the Cape—as indeed in all other countries where I have found them. My own experience would not by any means lead me to describe this feeling as prejudice; but, whatever be the evil of such institutions, and whatever harm they work to the bodies and souls of "converts," no one who has emerged from the surrounding desert into that green isle of Mamre could do aught but bless the *padres*. If it be only for displaying what this land *might* be, they deserve our thanks. One would have wished to halt awhile here, and explore the secrets of the place with official guidance; though I'll confess a deep distrust for that order of men called missionaries, be what may their creed. It would be interesting to learn what all this teaching really has achieved, and how far the converts are fitted for an honest life in our world and the next. But time was pressing, and, knowing nought to the contrary, I will hope that Mamre is as pure within as fair without.

Amongst the visible signs of improvement in these parts was

Digitized by Google

the excellence of the road. We had not hitherto found cause for serious complaint, but this negative praise is due to nature, and not at all to art. At Mamre, and at Mamre only, through all this South African trip, we found a "made road." I would not guarantee that it was macadamised; but it looked to be so, and was certainly as good. For two or three miles each side the village we rolled along a smooth, hard surface, with no ruts in it nor big stones. All honour to the missionaries for this, whatever be their failings.

Thence we rattled on again over a track through the veldt. The time was waxing late, and it was evident we should be overtaken by the night before reaching Mosul-bank Bridge. But Cape horses are not used to travel more than two hours or thereabouts without food and rest; so, towards sundown we outspanned on the plain. The horses took a roll in the sand, a nibble of the poor herbage, and we set off again. Shortly after, dusk came on, and about the same moment it occurred to our driver to take a short cut. Hitherto we had been progressing with no very alarming incidents. The jolts, the leaps and plunges, the sudden drops and rises almost more startling, might have astonished a traveller in England; but, after all, one doesn't expect patent paving at the Cape. But there are bounds to the modesty of one's demand: patent paving lies at one end of the scale—pitfalls and barricados at the other. Into this extreme we now had fallen. Many times since then have I driven across the veldt when black night wrapped the scene, and our very hearts were in our mouths. But I don't remember any ride so perilous as that. The darkness was so dense, we could not see one foot of road before us. Only by the delicate twitching of the reins could our driver tell what manner of ground his team was traversing. Now the horses plunged down into a *sloot*, or rain-course, two feet deep, with banks rectangular; now they gaily made us leap a stone twelve inches high; anon they dragged us through a bush, and then again they jammed the one wheel in a cart rut whilst raising

Digitized by Google

the other on a bank two feet or so in height. Several times our driver himself became alarmed, and descended to examine the route. For ourselves, we none of us expected to strike the high road without an accident; and all the while our mad Dutch whip persisted in trotting. We fervently prayed for yet greater peril, if only the man could be so frightened as to pull his horses in; but, of course, no Englishman could think of making the request. We let him go his own gait. There was a bottle swinging within two inches of my temple, just in a line to cut the artery if we should be thrown over. I couldn't find courage to remove it whilst that demoniacal boer seemed so careless of his own neck. So we rattled along, banged up and down, right, left, to the front, to the back, holding on with both hands for actual fear of being tossed out, shaken in each particular nerve of the spinal cord, and with tongues nearly bitten through; for attempts had been made to sing and to tell stories. They ended in a gurgle and a gasp. But we tried to keep up the credit of our country, and I am sure the driver had no notion how frightened we really were. At length, after an hour and a half of this sort of thing, we got clear of that awful by-path, and struck the high road again. Half an hour after, Mosul-bank Bridge was reached, and the little Irish landlord of the little inn made us welcome with eggs and bacon. That drive gave me the hint of an explanation for the great sobriety of the farmers in this part. It is evident that drunkards cannot live in the country. They must break their necks at the first offence if conviviality be kept up till nightfall.

Amongst the disadvantages under which the western lands labour—of the eastern I know nothing—are the moving sand-hills. We had seen many such in the road from Saldanha Bay, and a curious appearance they present. All the earth, pasture ground and wheat-field alike, must be described as sand. I may conscientiously declare that no atom of what Europeans call "soil" met my eyes from the time of leaving England till the time of returning. The earth of South Africa is of various colours, and,

Digitized by Google

no doubt, of various degrees in poverty. Some is salt sand (*zuur-veldt*), some sweet (*goet-veldt*); but sand it is, every acre of it. The moving hills, however, are of a different quality. Peripatetic deserts, one might call them, creeping monsters that devour the useful land. They are found of all sizes; from the little hillock that resembles a cartload of sand thrown down, to the wide-spreading sea of snowy billows. Round the extremest edges of the waves, tall bushes, up to their waist imbedded, thrust their heads; but in the centre, all is blinding white and stainless. Grain by grain, so slowly no eye can trace, so surely no power can resist, the hill moves inland. Behind it, as the mass goes yearly onward, its receding waves expose again the ruined land, with shrubs and flowers crushed and scorched to shapeless heaps, and earth encumbered by the leavings of its barren march. Though efforts to fence out the desolating inroad are quite useless, it is no difficult task to arrest its course by gentle means. The farmer on whose grounds this dreaded foe shall come, has a right to government help in staying it. This is done by planting a quantity of ice-plants (*Mesembryanthemum*) upon its advancing slope. The feeble creeper stretches out its arms, and grasps and binds the restless sand; its march falters, and at length, when all the surface is thus overgrown, it stops entirely. Our little Irish host was very anxious about one of these monsters, not without reason. As he ingenuously told me, he had watched its progress with great interest for several years; nor does he seem to have taken fright until the tall crest of sand was almost curling over his small cottage. It was barely ten yards away when we saw it; a billow twenty feet in depth, hundreds of yards in length and breadth. He had called for help in mighty haste at last, and the ice-plants had been thickly sown along the slope. It only remained to watch whether the remedy had been too long delayed. Mr. Burns estimated that this hill travelled about fifty yards *per annum*.

We slept at Mosul-bank Bridge, and, the next morning, early, drove into Capetown.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

THE CASE AT ISSUE BETWEEN ENGLAND, THE FREE STATE, AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

The absolute necessity of England's annexation of Waterboer's territory—The threatened Diamond-field Republic—Outcry of the Albanian farmers—The division of the Griquas—Recognition of both clans by the Capetown Government—Kornelis Kok—Counter assertions—Foundation of the Transvaal and Free State—Occupation of Bloemfontein by Sir Harry Smith—Major Warden and his grants—Abandonment of the Sovereignty—Article 2 of Sir G. Clerk's Convention—Declaration of the Vetberg boundary—Withdrawal of Waterboer's subsidy—Appearance on the scene of Mr. David Arnot—His first success—Resignation of Kornelis Kok in favour of young Adam—Death of Kornelis Kok—Retirement of young Adam Kok and his tribe into Nomansland—Sale of his lands to the Free State through Mr. Harvey—Waterboer's five points—Annexation of Griqualand West to the English Crown—Arrival of the Commissioners—Extent of the new annexation—The claims of the South African Republic—General arming of the negroes.

THIS seems to be the proper moment for explaining by what title the English Government has obtained the Diamond regions, and on what ground the Free State and the South African Republic have disputed its rights. I went into the subject as deeply as my opportunities would allow, and I had prepared an elaborate statement of the case at issue, illustrated with blue books, fortified by independent evidence, and rounded off with the result of my own inquiries. But it has occurred to me that few would care for such documents. No one in England could form an honest opinion, were he crammed full of them. The case depends, in too great measure, upon hard swearing, personal credibility, and obscure native customs. There are arguments of great value

Digitized by Google

on either side, and I, having studied the question carefully, am almost inclined to say that England's strongest plea was the necessity of the case. That necessity was urgent. It was but the expected intervention of England which awed the more ambitious diggers, always eager to erect their community into a "Diamond Fields Republic." Confusion confounded, war in all directions, must have followed this step. And there was also the Albanian difficulty, threatening official peace at Capetown. A number of colonists had treked into Albania, part of Griqualand, upon the invitation of the Griqua chief. These farmers threatened legal proceedings if the governor should not protect them, on the soil of England's ally, from the insolent pretensions of the Free State. But when I say that necessity was a sufficient plea, it is not meant that the English arguments are unsound, much more that they depend upon misstatement. I am firmly satisfied that right as well as expediency are with us. But it seems best to tell the tale as simply as may be.

When the nation of the Griquas, who inhabited, amongst other regions, the territory now called Griqualand West, first comes upon the historical horizon, it is found to be split into two clans. These were ruled by two families—the Koks of Philippolis, north of the Orange River, and east of the Vaal; the Waterboers of Griquatown, west of the Vaal. This division, I believe, was caused by missionary intrigue. The Rev. Dr. Philip for some reason disliked the original capital, Griquatown, and surveyed with much more pleasure those fertile lands upon the Orange bank. He persuaded the old chief, Adam Kok, to move thither, and founded Philippolis, about 1819. The influence of his brother missionaries, Wright and Moffat, induced many Griquas to disobey their chief, and to remain in the old home. Moffat, casting around for a chief to rule these faithful, selected a shrewd negro named Andreis Waterboer, who had been educated in the mission school. This man was chosen chief of the Griquas of Griquatown by popular election, and old Adam Kok seems

Digitized by Google

to have made no difficulty about surrendering to him one half his dominions. The formal delivery of boundaries was exchanged between the two chiefs subsequently, called for ever after the "Platberg line." Upon this treaty, still extant, Waterboer of our day takes his stand.

The independent sovereignty of both these houses was recognised by the Government of Cape Colony long before Free State or Transvaal came into existence. Both chieftains were subsidised to the amount, Kok of £200, Waterboer £150, per annum, for the service of guarding our northern frontier and protecting trade with Kuruman against the more lawless Basutos, Korannas, and other blacks.

At whatever date the division took place, it was established before the year 1838. At that time the declaration of boundaries was exchanged between the pair, to which I have referred. Andreis Waterboer, father of our claimant, therein lays down his eastern frontier as a line extending from Ramah Mission House, through David's Graf, to Platberg, a boundary which Kok evidently recognised, since he signed the document. From this assertion the Waterboers have never swerved. The English advocates show a corroborative array of evidence upon their side, which would be quite irresistible, were not the Free Staters prepared with documents almost as conclusive. I say "almost" because, though the case be most involved and doubtful, *proofs* of forgery have been shown against the other party, while Waterboer's papers are unattackable.

Besides these potentates, however, there was a Griqua chief of the Kok family who resided at a place called Campbell. He was unquestionably a man of wealth and importance, dwelling in a large stone house, the ruins of which surprised me by their magnitude. The status of this man, who was named Kornelis, is the gravamen of our dispute. Waterboer alleges that Kornelis Kok was his subject, occupying a position somewhat like that of our feudal barons. He owed and rendered allegiance, nor was

Digitized by Google

accredited independent by those who held immediately from him. This view, of course, is upheld by the English Government. The Free State, on the other hand, assert that the chief of Campbell was as absolutely royal as his kinsman of Philippolis, and more so than Waterboer himself. In support of their argument they put forward various letters and documents that passed during his lifetime between Campbell and the Capetown authorities, in which Kornelis is addressed and treated as an independent chieftain. Our Government has lately yielded this point, which has indeed small moment either way, for it is not to be accounted evidence that the colonial officers mistook the rank of a barbarous potentate, dwelling in regions then almost unknown. The Free State would make a real point in demonstrating that Waterboer had so treated the chief of Campbell; but this they fail to show.

We now come to that great epoch of South African history—the exodus of the *Voor-trekers*, or Fore-trackers. It was in 1835 that the bolder spirits of *Boerdom*, impatient of a hated rule, conceived the adventurous project of escaping from it across the Orange River. To the number of some thousands, they harnessed up their oxen and fled the colony. This first effort, however, proved unfortunate. Two years later a large portion returned across the Orange, beaten by circumstances, but resolute to try again. Others treked across the Drakenburg into Natal, where English sovereignty was not yet proclaimed. But a short time afterwards, 1842, their enemies pursued them thither, and hoisted the blood-red flag. The Natal boers resisted, were beaten, and treked backwards. Most of those who had recrossed the Orange once more put themselves in motion. The second exodus took place, and the future territory of the Free State was overrun. At the same time returning boers from Natal founded the South African Republic, which is usually called the Transvaal. Disturbances followed along the line of the Orange River, and in 1848-9 Sir Harry Smith was sent to bring back the fugitives to their allegiance. After a trifling check at Boomplattes, the young

Digitized by Google

capital of Bloemfontein fell into his hands. Be it observed, there was as yet no state, nor republic, nor government; a patriarchal rule prevailed across the Orange. The territory, or rather the subjects, thus reconquered, were entitled "The Orange River Sovereignty," and for five years the English crown held sway over it. The administration of affairs was entrusted to Major Warden, a competent officer, and one who did his duty to the last, but an invalid from the beginning. The English Government had never claimed authority upon the lands in Griqua occupation; but Major Warden, in the confusion of affairs, which his health would not allow him to smooth out, unquestionably made grants of land beyond the ill-defined boundaries of his power. He gave away, under the colonial land laws, a certain number of farms upon the territory recognised now as belonging to Waterboer, and called Albania. Upon these grants the Free State lay the greatest stress; but it is manifestly absurd to hold a Government responsible for mistakes committed by its agent, which, at the first information, it cancelled. Had the colonial authorities not repudiated the Warden land grants until this dispute arose, the Free State advocates would have held strong ground. But, fortunately, this was not the case, as we shall see.

Five years after the annexation, Cape colonists began to find that the Sovereignty did not pay. Its boers utterly refused to become loyal subjects, and the expense of keeping them down caused protest both at home and in the Assembly. It was resolved to abandon the ground annexed, and, in 1854, Sir George Clerk was dispatched as high commissioner, to arrange the terms of an accommodation with the rebels. At a convention held with their chiefs, February 23, 1854, the matter was amicably arranged, and the British flag hauled down. Thereafter the Free State took its existence, inheriting the boundaries, very ill-defined, of the extinct Sovereignty. It is quite certain, however, that no Griqua land was included in them, whether belonging to Philippolis or Griquatown, to Kok or Waterboer.

Digitized by Google

Article 2 of this treaty is to be noted, forming as it does a strong point in the Free-State argument :—

"The British Government has no alliance whatever with any native chiefs or tribes to the northward of the Orange River, with the exception of the Griqua chief, Captain Adam Kok; and her Majesty's Government has no wish or intention to enter hereafter into any treaties which may be injurious or prejudical to the interests of the Orange River government," *i.e.* the Free State. Of this hereafter. It has never been signed by her Majesty.

On October 15, 1855, Captain Adam Kok, of Philippolis, took a step which appears most unjustifiable according to the English, the Waterboer argument. Ignoring the boundaries fixed between the Griqua chiefs in 1838, Kok, or his agents, sent in a statement of Waterboer's proper frontier, as between him and the Free State, which sheered away a monstrous slice. The line then laid down, and asserted now by the boers, is called the Vetberg line. It includes all those illegal grants made by Major Warden, whose unfortunate illness now bears its fruit. The question whether Waterboer ever admitted or recognised this Vetberg line, is just one of those hard-swearing cases alluded to. If he did, the poor fellow might be excused, and his rights should not justly lapse. Half a loaf is proverbially better than no bread, and Waterboer may have been but too happy to find one acre left to him. But he himself alleges, and the English party allege, that he never heard of Kok's proceeding for two years after the event, and that he never ceased to protest; bringing ample evidence in favour of this view, as indeed the Free State brings evidence against it.

This same year the Capetown Government arrived at the conclusion that £150 a year might well be saved by withdrawing an unnecessary subsidy from Waterboer. A letter to this effect was sent to him. Very miserable was the chief when this news came. From all his vast lands, vast whether Vetberg or Platberg line be granted, no fixed revenue arose. This £150 represented his one certain source of income, and now Capetown economists threatened

Digitized by Google

to beggar him. It chanced that a certain agent of the Colesburg Law Courts, allied to the chief in blood, was passing through Griquatown that night. Calling on Waterboer, he found that worthy fellow in tears. Mr. David Arnot inquired the cause, the chief explained, and finally Mr. Arnot was moved to write a letter to the Secretary of State in England, setting forth Waterboer's and his father's services. Thereafter they had a long talk upon the grievances of the chief, and Arnot went away with misty ideas of some great thing to be effected. In due course arrived from home an assurance that the subsidy would be continued. Full of joy, Waterboer sent messenger on messenger to seek his friend. Arnot returned. Again they talked of rights ignored, of robberies and cruelties committed by the Free State. In the end, he was nominated as "Agent and Representative of the Griqua Chief." Hereafter, we find no vagueness, no hesitation, no listless accepting of wrongs. The Free State found itself met by a spirit as bold, and vastly more subtle than its best councillors. With David Arnot behind him, Waterboer became an eager foe, lynx-eyed to fraudulent dealing, beyond their cleverest lawyers at a bargain, threatening even by times. Henceforth, the Griqua chief has a policy. He offers his allegiance and all his wide dominions to the English Government, claiming always and ever the Platberg boundary.

In the meanwhile, Kornelis Kok is dead. Before this event, he finds himself too old for such troublous times. Though boasting a quiver full of sons and daughters, he, for some reason, will not trust one of them with his heritage.* At the invitation of his uncle, Adam Kok—this is the second Adam, son to the first—

* In the narrative of these events I follow, to some extent, the story told me by Mr. Bartlett, the son of the first missionary at Campbell. Mr. Bartlett is an ardent upholder of the Free-State claims. He did not represent himself to me as such, but, whether it be or not, I see no reason, personally, to discredit the report he gives of a matter that passed under his own eye. Kornelis Kok may, probably enough, have arrogated authority, on the suggestion of others perhaps, which was not justly his.

Digitized by Google

comes to Campbell. Kornelis assembles his Griqua subjects in the big garden below his house. He rates them well for insubordination; declares that the Free State will eat them up if they persevere in such goings on; and finally summons them to witness, that from this time forward he releases them from loyalty towards his house, and delivers them, with all his public lands, rights, and duties, to the elder branch, represented by young Adam, now present. Adam accepts the charge. In a few words, he tells them that the safety of the Griquas depends upon their constancy and prudence. Henceforward, the Campbell clan is added to the tribe of Philippolis.

The main fact of this incident is denied by Waterboer and his backers—*vide* General Hay's letter to Mr. Brand, dated Oct. 15, 1870. It must be admitted on all sides, that no documentary proof exists to determine the value, or even the occurrence, of this most important transaction, which is indeed a curious omission. Perhaps both Koks, uncle and nephew, were aware that their doings had no legal ground. Perhaps, on the other hand, they looked upon the matter as so strictly and unquestionably lawful, it was needless to record it.

In course of time Kornelis Kok died; his sons and daughters sacked the fine stone house, and moved away. Adam Kok, meanwhile, as he himself says, "was crowded out of Philippolis." The boers had occupied all his public lands, and nearly all the land in private hands. Nothing was left but the private property of the chief, and this he held by no certain tenure. Kok then applied to the Capetown authorities for leave to trek away into Nomansland, a fertile but lawless district, bordering on Natal and British Kaffraria. The Colonial Government was but too happy. In consequence, Adam Kok began to put his house in order. He issued a notice to all loyal Griquas under his jurisdiction, to hold themselves in readiness to accompany his march. This summons he bore in person to Campbell, and his people there heard it without objection; it is alleged, however, by Waterboer, and owned

Digitized by Google

by Kok himself, that this decree was addressed only to his own subjects residing on the Campbell grounds. He then prepared a power of attorney, in favour of a certain Henry Harvey, for the purpose of selling his private property. Had that power been drawn up with proper strictness, these disputes could not have been as vague as they are now. Adam Kok, however, did not define with sufficient minuteness the land he had to sell, and "hence their tears." Armed with the power, such as it was, Harvey negotiated with the Free State Government, and ultimately sold to them all Kok's territory and rights for £4,000 sterling. The instrument was dated December 26th, 1861, and in it the Campbell grounds were included, as well as the Philippolis territory. Who is to blame for this fraud? as the English jurists put the question. They contend that Adam Kok showed *bona fides*, and appeal to the wording of the power of attorney. It is not denied either that the Free State may have been deceived. By one argument, Mr. Harvey is the culprit. He wilfully twisted the words of his power to include lands which were not Kok's to sell, and which Kok, as is alleged, had no intention of selling. But, on the other hand, Kok signed a deed, and the deed produced bearing his signature, alienates the Campbell ground. Kok wrote to his cousin, brother-in-law, and heir, Nicholas Waterboer, previous to his parting for Nomansland, that he had signed no deed which could include the disputed territory. We should like to know whether the deed put in evidence was read to the Philippolis chief. A letter of Kok's is extant, in which he utterly denies this. If Mr. Harvey was a man to knowingly sell what was not his, nor his employer's, he may well have juggled an ignorant and dissipated chieftain into putting his name to a document he had not mastered. It has been stated, however, that Harvey spoke to friends in Colesberg, to the effect, that "if he had known the Campbell lands were included in his power, he wouldn't have been such a d—— fool as to take £4,000 for the lot."

My story draws to an end. The case is stated, with its main

Digitized by Google

arguments on either side. Thereafter we come to details, ugly enough many of them. To recount them would need a volume. The Free State comes out badly all through the list of the corroborative documents. Reckless misstatements, appeal to evidence non-existent, forgery itself, is proved against its citizens. Waterboer, guided by Mr. Arnot, maintains a resolute and steady course. Not a single inch can his enemies entice him from the ground he occupied at first. He puts forward, again and again, always without rebutment, the five points on which he rests his claim:—

1. The Frontier Treaty of 1838 between his father and Adam Kok's father, defining their mutual boundary as the "Platberg line." A treaty still extant, and not disputed on any hand, nor even alleged to be re-modelled from the day of execution up to this.

2. A corroborative letter from Adam Kok the elder, dated 1843, and addressed to the governor of Cape Colony, in which the Philippolis chief declares the treaty of 1838 to contain the boundaries of his jurisdiction.

3. Letters from both Kok and Waterboer, dated 1845, to the Colonial Secretary, agreeing to the same effect.

4. A paper addressed by Kok to Waterboer, in 1848, representing that, as many of his people were proceeding to Campbell, the very lands in question, they would in consequence be beyond his own jurisdiction, and in that of Waterboer. To these persons, as we hold, did Adam Kok address his summons to emigrate, and to no others.

5. A letter addressed to Waterboer himself, by the President of the Free State, under date April 28, 1862, four months after the purchase of Adam Kok's property, in which the writer admits Waterboer's right of jurisdiction on the left bank of the Vaal River.

Kornelis Kok is declared to have been a British subject, born in the Colony, and resident there until of age; after which time he visited Griquatown, and was by Andreis Waterboer appointed a petty officer under his government, and stationed at Campbell,

Digitized by Google

where he exercised the authority deputed to him by Waterboer, until deprived of office.

The upshot of these affairs is well known. Waterboer several times offered his allegiance and all his territories to the English crown. A resolution of the Cape Parliament accepted this proposition on August 5, 1871. About the same date, President Brand gave way upon the long-vexed question of an arbitrator. After wearisome negotiations, he consented to submit his case to Lieut.-Governor Keate, of Natal, who gave a verdict for Waterboer and the Platberg line. Before this event the Free State had exercised its authority over the dry diamond fields, which lie within the Campbell territory. Governor Keate's award was delivered in October, 1871, and Sir H. Barkly lost no time in acting upon it. On the 28th of that month, all Waterboer's wide domains were annexed to the English crown, *not to Cape Colony*, in a series of proclamations reprinted in the Appendix of this book. These were at once sent to the Fields, together with proper officers. The territory is henceforth known as Griqualand West. Three gentlemen, Messrs. Campbell, Bowker, and Thompson, took the title of Commissioners administering the government. A High Court of Justice, without privilege of appeal, except to the House of Lords, was placed under Mr. Justice Barry, with Mr. Commissioner Thompson as attorney-general. The country is divided into three magistracies, Pniel, Klipdrift, and Griquatown. To the last, respectively, Mr. Commissioner Campbell and Mr. Francis Orpen were gazetted. Pniel, in which stand the great dry diggings, had Mr. Giddy, in whose temporary absence Mr. Gilfillan occupied the post.

The formal annexation took place on November 7th. There was little or no enthusiasm, nor did any great disturbance rise when an American digger hauled down the English flag just after it had been hoisted on Dutoitspan. All contemplated with alarm the probable results of British law upon their industry. They feared difficulties with the negro, needless interference with their

Digitized by Google

rules. But at a public dinner held that day in Dutoitspan, Mr. Commissioner Thompson gave great satisfaction by a short and simple speech. He said that although the Proclamation declared that the laws of Cape Colony would be administered here, special note should be taken of the qualifying clause, "in so far as the same be not inapplicable to the circumstances existing." This was an important reservation. For instance, a strict and literal interpretation of the Masters' and Servants' Act would bring about the sudden and immediate appearance of a crowd of independent native diggers in their midst, which was neither to be desired nor to be feared by any one.

Next day, a criminal named Duffy, in custody of the Free State police, appealed to the passers by, and claimed protection of the English authorities. He was released upon that ground by the new police. Thereupon, Mr. Truter, the Free State magistrate, solemnly arose from off his bench, violently protested against this interference, and broke up his court. So ended Free State rule upon the diamond fields, with the protest of Mr. President Brand, dated November 7, in the Appendix.

Some natural curiosity may be felt in England as to the character and extent of our latest acquisition. No one will be more surprised than was myself to learn how monstrous is this slice of Africa over which the Union Jack now metaphorically flies. One gets used to think that the far-famed lands of Waterboer are just the diamond-fields, with some small fringe of territory on all sides, not worth speaking of until diamonds are found to be abundant there. But the region now worked, though fifty miles long and near as many broad, is only a fraction of the space on which our lion has laid his paw. But few maps, I suppose, will yet be found in which the places and lines enumerated in the Proclamation are set down. The eastern boundary on the south line—Ramah mission-house upon the Orange River, some fifteen miles to the eastward of Hopetown—is distant from Old Platberg, the eastern limit on the north, fully a hundred miles as the crow

Digitized by Google

flies; but, in point of fact, the boundary runs at an obtuse angle outwards, through David's Graf.* The northern line, which inclines considerably to the east, is eighty miles in direct measurement from old Platberg to Koning; the western boundary from Koning to Kheis, through the northernmost spur of the Langebergen mountains, is rather over a hundred and fifty miles; while the Orange River, forming the southern frontier, would count nearly the same distance in a straight course: the river frontage, with its windings, is actually calculated at two hundred and twenty miles. Taking a diagonal line from Old Platberg to Kheis, we have the respectable figure of two hundred miles. This is no mean territory for a kingdom.

The South African Republic's claim may be dismissed in very few words. The boers of that country made war upon the Kaffirs and bastard tribes allied in blood with the Griquas, dwelling westward of the Vaal River. In one of their cruel and murderous campaigns, so long ago as August, 1858, they captured many women and children at the sack of Touns and other places belonging to Mahura, with whom they were not at war. These they held to ransom for a certain number of cattle. The women eventually were given up—not the children, who are still slaves; but the stipulated cattle never came to hand. In revenge, the Transvaal annexed all the land where the Vaal and the Hart Rivers, including the district of Klipdrift, which belonged to Waterboer. That chief was no party to the war, but much did the Transvaal savages care for such distinctions. When diamonds were found at Klipdrift, President Pretorius sent down a *commando*, or burgher force, to establish his jurisdiction. The English Government protested, in the name of Waterboer. Pretorius finally agreed that all his claims beyond the Vaal should be included in Governor

* At this moment of writing I receive word that the original and true David's Graf has just been discovered on Jacobsdaal Common. A line through it may include the most thriving of Free State towns within the English boundary. This discovery will drive the Free Staters frantic. It adds about ten miles to the above measurement.

Digitized by Google

Keate's arbitration, with that of the Free State; for be it observed that the fame of Mr. Arnot has spread by this time, and he is agent, representative, and councillor, to all the great chiefs round. By the tact and skill of this diplomatist Pretorius was brought to refer, not the Klipdrift matter alone, but all his rights and Koranna wrongs, between the Vaal and Hart. Though Monkoran and his subjects have no claim upon English protection, Governor Keate, as a matter of course, gave his decision upon all the points submitted to him. The Transvaal was condemned on every issue, and lost its lands by the Hart, together with Klipdrift, though the Capetown authorities have no present thought of enforcing the award beyond Waterboer's territory. The excitement at this result is bitter. Many boer families have been settled in the disputed country for years, paid for their farms to each other, and consider their title as secure as in any part of the state. To find themselves subject to barbarous negro chiefs is what they will never bear. President Pretorius is threatened with impeachment for submitting their rights to arbitration,* and orders have been issued for summoning a *commando* of one thousand horsemen with four pieces of artillery. The negroes, on their side, have been flocking back to their old possessions, and everyone carried a rifle with him. Thousands of them have earned—or stolen—at the diamond-fields the means to purchase a gun. I have looked on with amazement and disgust whilst five hundred stand of tower muskets have been sold at one store in Klipdrift. There was not a white man buying; but every piece was purchased before breakfast time. The blacks went by in bodies of twenty, every man carrying his weapon. There was no secret as to the meaning of this exhibition. The grin with which a naked Koranna or Bechuana man told me he was going to shoot game by the Hart River would have convinced any jury in the world.

* He has since been deposed, and, after a provisional period under Mr. Erasmus, the Rev. Burgers has been elected in his room. The *commando* never assembled.

Digitized by Google

I asked our new magistrates if they had not the power to suppress this wholesale arming of a savage nation, whose object was to attack a people, bloodthirsty and unjust indeed, but politically our ally. They showed as much indignation as any one amongst the crowd of angry diggers, but feared the responsibility of interposing. I hope the day may never come when unprincipled traders of another nation may supply some savage foe of ours with means to do murder and violence, with the same cynicism as that displayed by the Klipdrift storekeepers. But such scenes are visible in all the settlements around, so it is not unreasonable to fear there may be wild work shortly in the plains beyond the Vaal.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

CAPETOWN TO THE FIELDS.

Routes to the diamond fields—From Capetown—From Port Elizabeth—From Natal—The Cape cart—The waggon—Arrival of the *Cambrian*—Wellington—The free lovers or *vederdoopers*—Start for the Fields—Our conveyance — Bain's Kloof—Scenery — Curious accident — Mitchell's Kloof—Ceres—Conradin's outspan—My fellow-passengers—The Karoo Port—Rumours of gold—Mr. Dunn—The Karoo—The Gouff—Tramps —An exhibition of diamonds—Beaufort West—Ostrich farming—Victoria —Night adventure—Hopetown—The Orange River—Pniel.

NEITHER at this time, nor on my return, did I see enough of Capetown and its society to justify criticism. It appears to be a pleasant city, well built and commodious in the more bustling parts, and not devoid of a quaint comeliness in its bye-places. There is mighty little of the picturesque, even about the most ancient streets—or, if there be anything of the sort, it didn't catch my eye. Some old Dutch houses there are, distinguishable chiefly by a superlative flatness, and an extra allowance of windows. The population is about 30,000 souls, white, black, and mixed. I should incline to think that more than half fall into the third category. They seem to be hospitable and good-natured in all classes. I have none but pleasant memories of Capetown. There is complaint of slowness, indecision, and general "want of go" about the place. Dutch blood is said to be still too apparent in business, in local government, and in society. I suppose there is sound basis for these accusations, since trade is migrating so rapidly towards the rival mart of Port Elizabeth, that a change of the seat of government is seriously

Digitized by Google

contemplated. But ten years ago the entire export of wool passed through Capetown. Last year, as I find in the official returns, 28,000,000 lbs. were shipped at the eastern port out of the whole 37,000,000 lbs. produced in the colony. The gas-lamps, put up by a sort of *coup d'état* in the municipality, were not lighted until last year, owing to the opposition of the Dutch town councillors. They urged that decent people didn't want to be out at night, and the ill-disposed didn't deserve illumination. Such facts seem to show that the city is not quite up to the mark in all respects.

Those who desire information touching Capetown, its appearance, manners, and politics, will find ample stores in every direction. By the kindness of Mr. W——, I was made a member of the Civil Service Club, and, surveying the scene from that comfortable retreat, I have nothing but praise. No remarkable sights caught my eye during the twenty hours I stayed. For a description of the Lion's Head, Table Mountain, and the other objects of natural interest, I refer the reader to a thousand books of travel. For myself, I know nothing new, and, *d'ailleurs*, my theme is Diamonds.

My first visit was to the office of the Inland Transport Company. I think this will be an appropriate place to detail the various routes by which the intending digger could at that time reach his destination. There was but one line of steamers between England and the Cape, the Union running two vessels a month. The fare to Capetown was £31 10*s.*, and to Port Elizabeth £34 13*s.*, if booked through; second class, one-third less. From Capetown to Port Elizabeth, if not booked in England, £6 6*s.*; to East London, by coasting steamer, £8 8*s.*; and to Natal, £11 11*s.* Since the days I speak of, competition has reduced the fare to Port Elizabeth to one amount with Capetown, and the prudent man will naturally take his berth to the furthest point, seeing it costs nothing more. He can leave at Capetown if he please. Greater changes and improvements will

Digitized by Google

doubtless be brought about in time, for the new service of steamers, the Cape and Natal Steam Navigation Company, is brushing the bloom off the Union line. So much for the sea route.

The diamond fields may be said to lie distant from Capetown seven hundred and fifty miles. As the crow flies, they will be scarce six hundred, but there are deserts intervening, which necessitate a long *detour*. From Port Elizabeth the distance is but four hundred and fifty miles; from East London, less than four hundred; and from Natal, a little below five hundred. It will thus be seen that the Capetown route is very vastly the longest of all. But, from whatever cause it happened, the slow and unenterprising citizens of the capital in this instance triumphed over their eastern rivals. None of these latter had as yet a regular transport service with the fields when the Capetown company was sending up a waggon every week with decent speed and punctuality. This, indeed, required no great effort. There was small risk of loss at the rate charged, £12, but it might well have been doubled without fear of driving custom off. Nevertheless, some enterprise and some management were needed to organize a regular transport service through a journey of seven hundred and fifty miles, when the roads are just such as traffic has worn; when villages lie hundreds of miles apart; and when the contractors must needs be boers, stupid, sullen, and listless as are no other white people in the world. Established, however, the Inland Transport Company was, when I reached the country. It had been so successful—as indeed it could not fail to be—that a second waggon a-week was about to start within ten days, and a rival company was in formation. Meanwhile, the go-ahead folks of Port Elizabeth and Natal still put their whole dependence upon post-carts and broken lines of provincial communication. So devious was the journey under these circumstances, that passengers from "the Bay" did not hope to reach their journey's end before the eighth day, whilst those from Capetown were

Digitized by Google

nearly always landed on the ninth, having saved three days' sea-passage, and £3 3*s.* or £6 6*s.*, as the case may be.

The Port Elizabeth route is not four hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies. It passes through a fertile and well-watered country: the Capetown lines traverse the Karoo, the Gouff, and other desert wilds. This then should be the favourite route. But the Port Elizabeth people have not shown themselves so smart in this matter as their rivals of the Cape. Fearing to undertake an enterprise so large as a direct service to the fields, they have hitherto submitted to the demands of Queenstown, which is anxious to open up the port of East London. To meet this exaction, they run their transport carts in a very roundabout course—through Grahamstown to Fort Beaufort or King William's Town, alternately, and thence to Queenstown. There is a change at Grahamstown, and another at Queenstown. From the latter place their passengers run the remaining distance in Ellar's carts. The time occupied thus uselessly stretches the journey to eight days, or near it. The fare is £16, and the allowance of baggage only twenty pounds. There is, however, a new service just starting, that of Messrs. Cobbe, well known in America and the Australian colonies. These enterprising Yankees, whose occupation has been taken from them by the opening of the Pacific Railway, have brought their transport carts across the Atlantic, and are almost ready to commence operations. They have selected a new line, direct from Port Elizabeth to the fields, through Cradock and Colesberg. They undertake to do the distance in five-and-a-half days, and all who have seen the American vehicles are enthusiastic in their praise. The fare will probably be about £12, but I must remind my readers that £3 should be added to this sum, in comparing it with the Capetown route, for the difference of sea-passage. To those few persons who design to travel up by bullock-waggon, Port Elizabeth is certainly the best destination, unless they can contrive to get into East London, a difficult thing to do, as I understand.

Digitized by Google

There is a third line by Natal, but very little used comparatively. Leaving Durban, the port, early in the morning, the afternoon finds the traveller at Maritzberg. This is a daily service. At Maritzberg, he must secure a seat upon the weekly post-cart to Harrismith, which lies two days and a half away. From Harrismith, by another post-cart, to Winberg, in a day and a half. From Winberg again to Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State, within the day. And from Bloemfontein to Dutoitspan, by passenger cart, in about twelve hours. The whole journey occupies five days, or a little more, travelling night and day. The cost will be about £12, but this, of course, does not include the expenses of eating, drinking, &c. I should have mentioned that these are not provided on any route, nor do the resources of the country protect a traveller from ludicrous privations and discomfort. On the Natal line also there is excitement. It is proposed to establish a transport, or passenger cart, direct to Durban. The time is expected to be about the same as by the present arrangements—25 lbs. is the allowance of baggage upon the post carts.

You will perceive that railways are as yet of no account at all in the system of these colonies. Travellers from Capetown get the advantage of the only one yet in existence, as far as Wellington, but this is only sixty miles. The "cart," with two, four, or six horses; or the "waggon," with eight to twenty oxen, is the conveyance everywhere. The Cape cart holds three persons beside the driver. It runs on two wheels, with a light wooden body, like our English tax-cart. A canvas awning, lined with green baize, is supported on iron stanchions. The sides and back are open, but can be protected with blinds, which, when not used to keep off sun or rain, are rolled up and buttoned to the awning. The vehicle runs very lightly, upon springs of the very best and strongest steel, made, I believe, expressly for this market; certainly, I never saw elsewhere the cart that would bear such frightful jolts and strains. They are adapted for careering over the open country, taking whatever comes, root, or stone, or bush,

Digitized by Google

ant-heap, water-course, or mud-hole. The waggon, on the other hand, is immensely long and narrow, covered with a tilt; it weighs probably 4 tons, and 9,000 lbs. is a moderate load. The long file of bullocks is harnessed to a stout chain, or rope of twisted hide. The driver sits behind them, armed with a monstrous whip. The handle thereof is a twelve-foot cane, and the lash, of plaited hide, is seventeen feet long. It cracks like a pistol on every ox in turn, making a cruel weal upon its side, but the thick-skinned creature doesn't seem to mind it much. An old bullock is scarred and carved like an apple-pie; but when the blow falls, he but shakes his head and moves a trifle faster. The leading and the wheel oxen are seldom punished. They have been promoted to their dignity on grounds of high personal merit, and they deserve the distinction.

The cart, of course, is used for travelling only. All merchandise and heavy baggage goes by waggon. Distance here is not counted by miles, but by hours; the speed of a cart being reckoned at six miles the hour, and of a waggon at three, or a little less. This estimate makes allowance for "outspanning," or resting, from time to time. A man on horseback is calculated to travel somewhat more slowly than the rate of a cart. Thus, when you hear that Pniel is distant from Dutoitspan four hours, you know that it will be about twenty-four miles in cart; which distance an ox waggon will cover in eight hours, and a man on horseback in five to five and a half. Nine-tenths of all trade at the fields is carried through Port Elizabeth. Capetown only makes an effort to compete in the lighter articles of merchandise. By harnessing a crowd of mules to his waggon, the Cape transport rider manages to distance his competitor, but the mules cannot be persuaded to draw more than 3,000 lbs., whilst the ox team, at need, will stolidly drag 12,000 lbs. The former animals also are expensive to keep, and liable to sickness. By either route, the charge is about the same, 35*s.* per 100 lbs.; a fearful tax upon articles of necessity. But the resources of the colony are so unequal to this sudden pressure of

Digitized by Google

business, that twenty times the supply of transport is demanded, and higher rates would willingly be paid. The ox waggon is very much cheaper to travel in than the cart. From Capetown, however, there is but small economy in using it. Forty days is quick travelling. Many have narrated to me the monotonous incidents of a sixty days' passage. Though the charge vary from £5 to £7 10s., it must be remembered that a man has five or six times the expenditure in living, which does much more than eat up his economy. From Port Elizabeth or Natal, if no accident happen to delay him, the traveller may get through in thirty days; usually, however, he is fortunate to escape the forty, and many have had an experience of fifty days. It might be thought that greater comfort would be found in the large long vehicle, but, most trying as is the confinement of a coach, it is scarcely more so than the jolting of an ox waggon. There is undoubtedly more freedom in the latter, and more fun. Oxen never go more than five miles at a stretch, nor do they trot with a full cargo. One may take a rifle and shoot, or may even fish if the wherewithal be handy —the river, the fish, and the tackle. Fifteen miles a day is the utmost to be got out of bullocks, so that a man may lag behind as far as he please, without danger of losing his billet.

These were the arrangements for inland travel when I reached Capetown. The changes and improvements that have taken place during my residence at the fields, will be mentioned hereafter.

I have every reason to congratulate myself on that lucky thought of travelling overland from Saldanha Bay. The Inland Transport Company's waggon was due to start next morning at seven A.M. All the seats had been full for weeks, nor was there a vacancy in the following vehicle, nor even in the third. The very civil clerk, however, busied himself in my interest. He thought there was one gentleman who might be induced to yield his place, and sent for him. A very few words settled the bargain, and I left the office happy in possession of a pink ticket, guaranteeing a seat—and nothing more—between Capetown and Pniel.

Digitized by Google

At this time, it had not yet become obvious to the eyes of any one in the capital, that the river diggings were played out, dead horses. Pniel and Klipdrift, rubbishing little villages, were still the twin metropolis of the fields. The "dry diggings," with their swarming mass of population, did not come within the official view. Government had no better information, or scorned to use it. They even fixed the seat of their authority beyond the river, at the tiny settlement of Klipdrift. The territorial division of the country was marked out with equal judgment. Dutoitspan, with its 25,000 inhabitants, New Rush and de Beers, with 30,000, must confess the supremacy of Pniel, with its 300 souls! And we poor travellers, in the same spirit, eager and burning to reach the promised land, must needs be carried twenty-four hours beyond our destination, in order that we may have the pleasure of returning at a cost of 15*s*.*

In the afternoon of this day, November 8th, the *Cambrian* arrived in harbour. We had got in at 9.45 A.M., and she panted up about 4 P.M. Mr. Doveton, the third officer, had performed a feat no little creditable; leaving Saldanha Bay on horseback towards half-past five in the afternoon, he reached Capetown, seventy-two miles away, by eight o'clock next morning. To cover this distance in fourteen hours and a half, in pitchy darkness, over such tracks, would have furnished matter for no unreasonable boasting to a jockey; for a sailor it was worthy the loudest applause. He found the small coast steamer *Natal* lying in port. The captain loaded up with coal, and started to the *Cambrian's* relief at noon. The night and early morning were passed in transferring fuel, and our bonny steamer came to port, as I have said, in the afternoon. Great was the relief throughout the colony when it became known that all was well. The anxiety of those who had friends on board was growing most painful. Forty-five days from England seemed really incredible even to those

* Pniel is thirty hours from Hopetown; Dutoitspan eight. From Pniel one has to return four hours to Dutoitspan.

Digitized by Google

poor folks of Capetown, used as they had been to the vagaries of the Union line. Our last act on board was the drawing up of a short address to Captain Diver and his officers, exculpating them from blame. The second and third lieutenants, however, had made up their minds before this to desert the service, and try "digging." Before I left the fields I had the pleasure of giving them welcome, and left them with the best anticipations of success.

At 7.15 A.M. on the morning of the 9th I repaired to the railway station as enjoined. There is nothing worthy of remark about this building nor about the train. It was crammed with people, whose whole talk turned on diamonds. I don't know whether they assembled there for the purpose of that discussion, but they did not appear to have any other object in view. The train arrived without disturbing, and left without interrupting, the thread of their discourse. I was subsequently told that the *Cambrian* had brought the very first intimation of that fall in diamonds which afterwards came on us with every mail; but why the Capetownians should assemble at the railway station to discuss their losses none could inform me. A second-class ticket for Wellington is included in the £12 transport fare. I duly displayed my pink voucher and took my seat. We started at 7.25 A.M. Elevated on a truck, our waggon accompanied us. The railway goes only to Wellington, sixty miles northwards, at present, nor am I myself very sanguine of its extension. This fragment cost the trifle of £625,000, and returns *nil.* Those who lent their money for it under Government guarantee secure their six per cent.; those who invested in debentures have the sense of patriotic sacrifice for their reward. Enthusiastic farmers and vine growers who freely gave their land for the railway, expecting to double the value of the remainder, are disappointed. So is every one except the evil prophets. But all parties are urgently working up the steam for another and a bigger effort. Nothing less than a line to Port Elizabeth and thence to the diamond fields will content them.

Digitized by Google

The country through which we passed was thinly wooded and somewhat bare of houses and cultivation, but not sterile in appearance. Great part of it lay fallow, and indeed there were very few crops visible. The grace of water one does not hope for. Small and closely cut vineyards meet the eye here and there; but one could not help murmuring that if this sort of land was a fair specimen of Cape pastures, they gave the dreariest of all prospects. I afterwards found that it was indeed a very fair specimen. There is nowhere else in the Western province, nor in Griqualand, a scene to be compared with this for smiling fatness.

Wellington was reached about eleven A.M. It is a pretty village, lying at the foot of a lofty mountain range. The houses are white, and have a stoop in front, protected by green railings. Fine trees overshadow the streets, and very graceful foliage is seen above the garden walls. Apples, apricots, pomegranates, figs, and bananas all flourish together with native fruits such as "loquops" and "gooseberries." Such breaks of foliage are constant, for the houses stand mostly at a little distance from each other. There may be 2,000 inhabitants of Wellington, perhaps more.

The one remarkable feature of the place is a sort of Agapemone, as is alleged, organized and conducted by a good old gentleman named Groenewoud, who emigrated from Holland with some precipitation. I should much have liked to gather information about this establishment. Colonies of Free Lovers I have seen, but their creed is vulgar and unvenerable. The faith of the Anabaptists, whatever be its *inconvenants*, is at least ancient. It has withstood the bitterest of all persecutions, and even the pitiless wear of time. It has shaken mighty states in its terrible enthusiasm. I, for one, respect any creed that has real life, to last, to sting, and to endure. And then I'll confess a shameful ignorance of modern Anabaptism. It's very fine to dismiss the subject with a Podsnap wave. Perhaps Mr. Groenewoud and his

Digitized by Google

allies do keep their wives in common, as did Matthias and Jean of Leyden. Perhaps, on the other hand, this is all vulgar scandal. I should like to know. We had with us on the *Cambrian* a passenger, Swiss by birth, who is a leading glory of the *Vederdoopers*, as this Wellington sect is called; a more charming gentleman could not be found. He and two brothers had sacrificed considerable wealth and high reputation in Europe to follow the prophet. Mr. S—— certainly did not seem disappointed after many years' experience of the faith. He spoke to me of his wife with just as much appearance of distinct and unquestioned ownership as any bishop might do. I should like to know. There was always much talk amongst Cape people of a certain action that took place in a court of law some years back, in which the most damnable facts and deeds were sworn against the *Vederdoopers*, but I never could gain a sight of the report, nor were the accusations retailed to me other than the vaguest. Mr. Groenewoud is alleged to have been driven from Holland, but I am informed that the charge against him was of a civil nature, connected with mere money and business. From thence he passed to England, and made several converts, who now dwell under his shadow at Wellington. He travels everywhere, and the institution thrives. How many *Vederdoopers* now are extant no one knows, but it is said that their congregation is a very large landowner in this neighbourhood.

Two inns the Wellingtonians have wherein to refresh themselves, and to one of these I drove in a ramshackle conveyance, accompanied by three Hebrew Jews and one Hebrew Christian. By Hebrew Jew I understand the superlative degree. Cape Colony is a great hunting-ground for the tribe. They fatten on its heavy, credulous boers, especially the German variety. Perhaps I may find occasion to write a chapter on the influence of the German Jew upon the fortunes of this poverty-stricken land. Whilst I with others was at breakfast in the hotel the waggon drove up. A description of the vehicle in which one had to make a journey

Digitized by Google

of ten days and nights will be appropriate. The transport waggon is a gigantic van, with low wooden sides and a flat roof of canvas supported on iron stanchions. It is thus all awning and body. Curtains of canvas, however, hang from stanchion to stanchion, capable of buttoning down in case of rain or overheat. Under these, now rolled up, big pouches are suspended, by the four corners, full of bottles, flasks, meat-tins, and other objects. They oscillate and bang your miserable head to bits should you crouch up too snugly in the angle. Across the body of the waggon are fixed three seats, each calculated to bear three persons. In front sit the driver and the "leader," up to their knees in ropes, and thongs, and broken harness. They commonly violate the company's rule by admitting an extra passenger between them. At back is a *coupé*, occupied by the guard and two travellers. Thus the full complement is eleven—nine inside and two behind; but twelve can be carried, and very frequently is. Add to them the driver, leader, and guard, making fourteen or fifteen. As much luggage as can be crammed therein is put into the boot, and the remainder is corded on each side the vehicle in a miscellaneous heap. It was a comfortable reflection to me that the pile would act as a first-rate buffer in the event of an overturn. I had no luggage there of my own.

To our allotted seats we climbed when the bugle first rang out the devoted twelve. Eight fine horses, mighty light in the matter, of harness, stood ready to go at a touch. The word was given, and, with a furious bound and jolt, the lumbering waggon started at a gallop. Down the street, round the corner, with clang of hoof and crack of whip, shout of child and clamour of bugle—off to the fields! Our leaders are all over the road, galloping at every angle from each other. The traces lie across their necks, and swingle-bars are tossing all about. "Keep them going!" is the cry. A jerking of the rein would be——smash! And our drivers *do* keep them going! The thirty-foot whip cracks on their hides like a rifle shot; now here, now there, now curled up

Digitized by Google

to catch the wheel-horse, now let out to touch the fiery leaders, light and straight as a fly-line. The stalwart Hottentot who holds the reins is bent like a bow with the strain and struggle. The rush of wind through that burning air is almost cold about our ears. Rocking and reeling the great machine rolls on, plunging round corners, seeming to double up. In five minutes we are clear of apricot hedges, white houses, green palings, and the rest. And then, with the united efforts of driver and leader we pull up to mend our broken harness. Such a mean and shameful ending has ever a "burst" in this country. Eight horses dragging at full gallop a weight of three tons would try the best leather that ever was tanned, and that is not the quality of which they make Cape fixings. I suppose one stops, on an average, every quarter of an hour on this journey to mend or rearrange the harness.

To manage a team of more than four horses there are always two drivers here. The chief of them, to whom alone the title is given, handles the whip—a monstrous implement. The butt is a pliant reed, twelve to fifteen feet long, and the lash, of bullock's hide plaited, measures sometimes twenty feet. Such an instrument would cut a piece from the horse's back like a knife, but it is reduced to more moderate torture by appending a *fore slock* of antelope skin. The "driver" is worthily preferred to the "leader," or rein-holder. To keep eight, ten, or twelve horses in hand is as much as the most experienced can do. To guide, to restrain the fractious, to make the whole long team pull all together, is the business of the whip. Practice from childhood upwards is needed to acquire the necessary skill for using a tool so inconvenient. In moments of difficulty the driver will lend a hand with the reins, but in general he sits beside, with watchful eye, and ready lash, counselling the "leader," swearing at him, chewing tobacco, and cracking his whip each instant. He is commonly a boer, or a "bastard," mulatto that is; the other is nearly always a powerful black.

Almost at the outskirts of Wellington we began to ascend the

Digitized by Google

great mountain pass called Bain's Kloof. An excellent road now winds along this dangerous strait. How trade or traffic could be pushed through in times before the making thereof, passeth the comprehension of the young traveller. The fact is, boers used to lower their waggons down by ropes from precipice to precipice, dragging them up the slopes with thirty to fifty oxen in a team; for several families kept company in the trek. The road over which we now trot so smoothly is a most creditable piece of engineering. Blasted here, and built up there, it winds along the side of lofty granite peaks, with giddy steeps beneath, and a canopy of overhanging rocks above. Very fine and impressive is the scenery, but all its beauties are chronicled more or less worthily in a score of journals. Suffice it, there is much that reminds one of the wilder parts of Scotland. Deep gullies lined with fern and broom, a slender stream at bottom, fretting amongst the purple rocks, dip from the road. Blue-furrowed hills wind mistily away from the further brink, showing grey valleys, patched with the golden stonecrop. High overhead the bare stern mountains tower, haunt of leopards and fierce baboons. Vultures circle round, and hawks with all sober variety of plumage build shaggy nests. Cape colonists may be proud of Bain's Kloof, both as a feat in road-making and as scenery. In fact, few visitors are allowed to leave without a trip hither, and on that account I pass it with casual mention.

Three hours from Wellington we reached the farther end of the pass, and changed horses at Darling Bridge. This is a pretty spot, where the rude and broken landscape of the mountains has not yet subsided to the dull horror of the plain. A long wooden inn is shaded with trees. Graceful foliage shrouds the rocky ground. All round is a garden of wild chamomile, and its sharp odour dwells upon the air. At this place we lunched, and started again about 3.30 P.M. All charm and beauty now left the landscape. Scorched slopes, clothed in pebbles as a garment, rose on either hand. In the deep dells and glades there was

Digitized by Google

indeed a greenish tinge of vegetation, but the upper land grew only stones. Sometimes, on a plateau between two hills, the earth thrust out a harvest of low, grey bushes, brittle and sapless. The swollen floods of rain had intersected all such spots with deep *barrancas*. There was neither soil nor grass; only sand, and pebbles, and burnt brush, and channels waterworn. Nothing lives here but snakes, and those wild animals which prey at night, and sleep in solitude the day. We heard no noise, we saw no living creature, nor any sign of man's existence for a stretch of hours. Before this little book is done, I shall have wearied my reader with descriptions of the desert. If he rise with the impression that these far-famed pastures of the Cape are for the most part dreary beyond the thought of man, I shall have conveyed to him the truth. There is but one exclamation amongst all classes, nations, and languages of emigrants :—"What a frightful wilderness!" they cry, with something of awe in their tones.

We met not a single traveller; one does not expect to do so. An unfortunate Hottentot we passed, on the brink of a little precipice. The road was carried here over masonry. This luckless being was on horseback, leading another horse. He stood on the offside to let us by. As we passed, one of our team made a little plunge to the off, struck the saddle horse, and sent him crashing over the side. The Hottentot saved himself with great dexterity, leaping upon his other animal. He didn't say anything, but hastily dismounted and bent over the edge. We pulled up, and most of us got down to aid. The fellow had already reached his horse, felt its limbs, and found it unscratched after a fall of twenty feet among the rocks. Dear me, how he then began to curse and to swear! We trotted on, leaving him to this consolation. About 4.30 P.M., outspanned to give our steeds a roll, which is the refreshment most dear to Cape horses,—not a hot nor cold roll, but a roll in the sand. Our halt was in a little plateau, with a dam and trees and kraal and a very poor cottage. There was an assemblage of women therein, diligently sewing. They said nothing to

Digitized by Google

us, but, in a shy, half-sullen manner, offered coffee. All were very plain, flat, flabby, with thin hair, and complexions of paste. I never saw a good-looking boer woman, nor one that had the least pretension to good looks. Strange it would be if girls so reared could keep their beauty. When it came to pay for the coffee, they muttered something about a bazaar then and there supposed to be busily progressing, in aid of Church funds somewhere. There appeared to be neither customers nor articles for sale. Classing this amongst the habits of the country, and to be honoured as such, I paid double price for the coffee, and "quitted." Thence we climbed Mitchell's Kloof, so named after the engineer officer who built the road. This fine pass resembles much the one we lately traversed, but on a smaller scale, and varied in its scenery by drifts of fine white sand. At the foot of the kloof lies Ceres, on a level smooth as the sea. It was 6.45 P.M., and pitchy dark as we rode up to the inn, and pitchy dark when we left again at 3 A.M., so that I do not feel justified in making remarks upon this village. The inn is a pleasant inn enough, more remarkable for abundance in its fare than for quality; but what a desperate and mournful mistake would be his who looked for Christian food beyond the walls of Capetown!

Second day.—Called from our beds—those who had obtained one—at 2 A.M., we got off within the hour. At 5 A.M., having witnessed that phenomenon called the dawn, so often talked about, so rarely seen, we reached Conradin's outspan, a cottage built by a farmer of that name to protect his privacy. Every landowner along a highway in this thinly-peopled country is bound to suffer travellers to unharness and refresh their cattle by the wayside. The unwritten law gives them an equal right to push his door open and walk in. This was all very well and pleasant when fellow-boers, or Englishmen of that same rank, were the only travellers, but with the traffic daily increasing it is already found a nuisance. Mr. Conradin has set the example of building a cottage specially for outspanning, where forage and coffee and eggs can be

Digitized by Google

bought without disturbing his domestic peace. It is a sensible idea, and contains, I hope, the germ of some public-house system. It must be borne in mind that the Transport Company does not undertake to feed you on this journey, and that the places where one may hope to get a meal lie fifty miles apart. Often the traveller has several days before him without the certainty of finding food. Whatever they may have been, the boers of this day are as far from hospitable as they well could be. And, indeed, it would be absurd to ask, and more absurd to grant, old claims at the present time. The farmer would be ruined were he to feed one half the crowd that weekly passes up, on foot or in ox-waggons. Of providing any sort of meal for payment he never thinks. Though greedy, his idleness could not be persuaded to such business as this. And so the voyager is bound to lay in stores of provisions, sardines, potted meats, bread, brandy, and all actual necessaries for the road. These he attacks when opportunity offers or the whim seizes him. They are stowed away handily in the big loose pockets I have mentioned. I should most strongly recommend the traveller to take with him two or three hams from England for occasions of this sort. And, warned by my own carelessness, I would remind him that hams require boiling.

We twelve companions now began to recognise each other. Two were barristers hastening to take the *primeurs* of the new High Court at Klipdrift. Two were merchants of Capetown, suffering from diamond fever; a fell disease which cut short many promising careers; knowing no more of gems than of hieroglyphics, they were dying to risk their fortunes in them. One was a contractor of the transport service, who, by-the-bye, showed prudence in quitting us at the confines of the stage he horsed. Then there was a mineralogist, going to prospect for diamonds, gold, and other trifles in his line of business. A woman travelling to rejoin her husband, who had a place amongst the lucky ones. Three young fellows going to dig, and one veteran returning from a spree in Capetown, made up a pleasant party. Starting from

Digitized by Google

Conradin's hut at 6 A.M. we had a brisk walk over the Dronsberg Mountains, whereof the scenery is red and sterile and pebbly as at Mitchell's Kloof. In the walk, all of living things I saw was a five-spot Burnet moth, lonely on a lonely bush. The waggon toiled up after us in long zig-zags. Reached the Karoo Port, 10.30 A.M., and changed horses. Gold is reported hereabouts, and the story gains general belief. There is a natural agitation just now through all these parts respecting minerals. The Government has taken into its employment a certain Mr. Dunn, not without reputation on the Australian fields. He is prospecting in every direction, to no result as yet except in the matter of copper. I hear that his opinion of Namaqualand is enthusiastic, but nothing official on this subject has yet appeared. Mr. Dunn reports that "signs" of gold, such as should predict immense riches, are to be found in nearly every district of the colony, but they never lead to anything. After tracing to a certain distance, one always sees them dwindle to the vanishing point.*

Karoo Port, as its name denotes, is the entrance of the desert. After traversing a pass, which winds beneath steep and rocky hills,

* This gentleman has incurred great derision in the Colony by suggesting—or being accused of suggesting—that the diamonds were "blown" by the wind to the places where they are found. The theory is said to have been broached at a lecture. Mr. Dunn complains that he has been misunderstood, and for the credit of common sense we will hope it is so. In his little *brochure* called "Notes on the Diamond Fields," I only find these two passages which could by possibility be twisted to the ludicrous theory alleged. Speaking of the sand found far beneath the surface at Bultfontein, which contains garnets and other crystals, he says that "the wind appears to have deposed it there" (p. 10). And again, in accounting for this fact (p. 11), he says, "The dyke, exposed to atmospheric agency, decomposed. In this process a quantity of lime was set free. This caused the ground to open during dry seasons in cracks and fissures. The wind blowing sand, containing small pebbles, minerals of various kinds, pieces of eggshell, &c., across the cracks, would gradually fill them up with sand and a large proportion of the heavier minerals. When the heavy rains returned, this sand would be washed down still deeper—" and so on. I know how rash it is to limit the force of folly, but this passage doesn't seem to prove that Mr. Dunn believes the diamonds to have been "blown" out of infinite space into Bultfontein and Dutoitspan *kopjes*. It may, perhaps, mean something almost as absurd, but not quite *that*.

Digitized by Google

at the mouth thereof we saw the Karoo, lying stretched before us. This is no waste of sand, like the Egyptian wilderness. In many parts it is found to bear a vegetation which, for the Cape, might be called tolerable. And yet there is perhaps no tract of land upon the whole earth's surface—certainly there is none I have seen in many wanderings—so horribly desolate and forbidding. Not in waves and hollows here, but one unbroken sheet of barrenness it lies. No object over six inches high, whether plant or stone, breaks that dead level, till in dim haze it fades against the low and dusty hills. At distant points a chip of crystal twinkles like a star. Beside the path, at every step, a hundred spring to light, and dazzle and expire. The sun pours down in pitiless supremacy. No shadow falls here but the gloom of a passing cloud. Even the stones that clothe the land are small and shadeless. A dusky knot of prickles here and there, a sprig of heath, a tuft of chamomile or sage, a thin grey arm of nameless root, a bulb like a football broken, pealing in the heat—such is the vegetation. The dry sand will not bear so poor a load as this except at distances yard wide. Its hot yellow drowns the feeble greys and olives. Though never a breeze be blowing, faint, pale whirls of dust arise, and circle languidly and fall again. But this is the home of Morgana the Fay. On every side you see her cruel cheats. Below the far-off hills, that bound our colourless horizon, her baths lie, great lakes of shining water. Islands there are in them, which cast reflections on the surface. Trees adorn the strand and breaks of lofty cane. Mirage and deception all! The sole thing real in all this landscape is that abomination stretched before you.

It is but a moment you may dwell upon the scene—just whilst your waggon rolls into the open. An instant more, all fades from sight in a lurid tempest. The dust leaps up like a foe from ambush. It wraps you round in clouds that are palpable. Nose, ears, mouth, hair, are filled at once. It penetrates your clothes, and makes an inner garment for your flesh. The horses are

Digitized by Google

invisible; driver and passengers loom fantastic through the mist. Such coughing and swearing Dives departed must know when first he enters on his doom. Then there is a cry for water, and the three-gallon keg is nearly drained. Such the Karoo desert, and such the pleasures of travelling it.

At 2 P.M., always in a scene like this, we reached Plaatfontein, and outspanned. Surely this must be the dreariest habitation in the world. Built of mud, surrounded by a mud wall, it stands wretched, dirty, and alone as a clod upon a dust-heap. Neighbours it has none, interests none, thought or civilisation—none! Shaped is it in the Kaffir fashion, but I do not believe any Kaffir would dwell in such a spot. We left in an hour, full of misery. Still through those eternal plains of dust, bordered by the same low hills. Crossed a ditch which on some occasions is the Patatas river; not at that moment, however. Canes and bushes lined the dry channel.

Dordan's Farmhouse, 7 P.M.—In this spot there is water, and the trees, fruits, crops, and life which follow it. We bathed in company with more, and more inquisitive, frogs than ever before made attack upon a man of virtue, and, issuing victorious from the fight, turned in by sixes in a company.

Third day.—Up at 2 A.M., we got under way at 3.15. At 5.45 A.M., outspanned on the Karoo. Most of us walked ahead, whilst the horses rested, and saw a noble sunrise. There is no climate where the sky-effects equal those of Cape Colony, but I am not going to describe them. The scenery was flat, and the herbage scrubby as yesterday. Abundance of *paaws*, *korans*, and partridges frequent these wilds. At 7.45 A.M., breakfasted at Zoutkloof, another oasis, where the Patatas stream—when there is one—reappears after a sojourn underground. The most harmonious family in the world dwell here, I should think: hackbuts, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music lay about the place. Barbarism, therefore, is not a thing necessary. Zoutkloof is the border of the Karoo, which measures sixty miles in breadth on

Digitized by Google

this track. At 9.5 A.M., we entered the Gouff, pronounced Kope, which signifies "much honey" in the old Hottentot tongue. Bees are here very numerous after rain, but vanish when the short-lived blossoms fade. Fish also, such worthless sprats as flourish in these waters, have this same trick of disappearance. When moisture fails, they evolve themselves in mud, and sleep contentedly until a shower revives them. I have been told that fish in this torpid state will live for years, coming to life when thrown into a water-bucket. It is not quite easy to tell why the Gouff has been distinguished from the Karoo. One appears to be as miserable as the other, so far as outer eye can judge. Just before the noon-day outspan, passed five poor fellows tramping it to the promised land. They had one horse amongst them, loaded with picks and spades and home-made sieves. They were from Caledon, and this their sixth day out. Thirty-five miles a-day in such terrible sun and dust is good travel. They had suffered all the tortures of thirst in the Karoo, and their eager prayers were now for water. On these two deserts not a few poor fellows have succumbed. To lose the road is almost certain death, whilst the temptation towards travelling at night becomes irresistible after one day's experience of the heat. There were, and are, continual discoveries of unknown dead in this wilderness. At Groetfontein, the next stage, we found two sailors making bricks. They had been picked up on the Gouff, senseless with thirst, and not an hour's life in them. Working for 2*s*. a-day, they were saving up money for a more prudent start next time. The number of people tramping up just at this season was small, but before I left the country every road swarmed with them. Every farmer, his harvest in, every shop-boy who dared a bolt, was hastening up for the cool season. I met with men who had "footed" it from Capetown, seven hundred and fifty miles, in eighteen days; several who had done it in twenty-two; and hundreds there are who have covered the distance in twenty-four. Reached Groetfontein 5 P.M., and Bloedriver 8.20 P.M.

Digitized by Google

Here is a quaint little cottage, half farm, half inn, half post-office. There is a long low dwelling of one story, a dam with willows over it, and a half-dozen fly-blown letters in cracks of the wooden wall. These epistles I studied with curiosity. How were they to reach their destination? This evidently is a problem beyond the good folks of Bloedriver also, for, on my return four months after, I found those identical letters, a little browner, dustier, and more fly-blown, stuck in the very same cracks. These, and a map of the world, wherein was marked the various diamond fields existing, formed the ornaments of the parlour, in company with a coloured print from the *Illustrated London News*. The ornaments out-of-door were bones and horns of antelopes, half buried in the sand. At this place we should have met the down-waggon, but it proved to be late—as usual. Swollen rivers somewhere were the cause conjectured. By eight in a company we sought a chamber.

Fourth day.—At 5 A.M. the down-waggon arrived, and some of our party recognised friends. In consequence, a little exposition of diamonds was inaugurated on a bed. One passenger, quite a boy, had no less than two hundred and thirty-five carats with him, mostly of good class. The prices asked seemed to me rather long, but those who laughed at my deferential valuation afterwards found cause to mourn. We were here informed that the declaration of English sovereignty had called forth little enthusiasm, but no opposition. It was universally expected that the very foolish burghers of the Free State would send down a commando, or militia force, to assert their rights. In that case, as was alleged—and I did not subsequently find reason for discrediting this—no resistance was to be expected from the bulk, even of English diggers. When the down-waggon had proceeded on its way, there was nothing for us to do but "loaf around" till the mules had fed and rested. I discovered a garden, hedged with pomegranate, as usual, all starred over with crimson flowers and growing fruit. Within the fence, lemons, pears, apples, figs,

Digitized by Google

sugar-cane, and quinces, were all flourishing together. We got away at 12.45 P.M., and outspanned at 3.30 P.M. at Flaak-kraal. Here one of us was taken with a fit, brought on by heat and persecution of the flies. I have said little about our torments from these causes. The fact is, I dread the subject. No words of mine could sketch the agonies we endured. I fear to make *bathos* of what should be *pathos* most affecting. Suffice it, that the sun ruled 130° to 140°, whilst we were packed so close as scarcely to allow movement. That we had no possible position for our legs but one; no change for our backs, nor rest for our heads. Dust blinded and stifled us. Flies! Well, I have travelled twice in Egypt. I have lived at Boulak, by Cairo, and at Esne, beyond Thebes. But with all solemnity I declare that the flies of South Africa to those are as the rule of Rehoboam to that of Solomon. Let this be understood for the future. We never had a cloudy day upon that journey, and we never escaped the utmost Beelzebub could do against us.

Beyond Flaak-kraal the road becomes very bad indeed, though not yet susceptible of comparison with the quagmires across the Orange River. Our mules, which were brutally overworked, could not drag the vehicle. By hard labour at the wheels, and merciless use of the whip, however, we reached at length Uitkyk at half-past two in the morning.

Fifth day.—We outspanned an hour, and off again. This was our first night absolutely without bed, and the morning showed a sudden break-up of the joviality reigning hitherto. One passenger began to complain of his feet, which were greatly swollen. Coffee, and washing at Koodoo's Kop, 6.15 A.M., improved our spirits. At this stage we loosed two mules, which had actually been in harness *twenty-six hours and a half*, and in that time had covered one hundred and ten miles. By such unheard-of barbarity the boer contractors of the line fill their pockets. The land about here, which is still the Gouff, lies buried under a sea of pebbles. It is always the same barren waste of plain,

Digitized by Google

colourless, treeless, grey, and parched. But neither the Karoo nor this desert are useless. When water for drinking can be obtained, sheep do well upon the scrubby pasture, except in very dry seasons. Steynskraal, 10.15 A.M.; left again 11.30 A.M. A strong wind, hotter than the simoon or khamsin, blew a torrent of fervid air into our faces. The dust was smothering. We opened our mouths like dogs, and choked and gasped alternately.

At 3 P.M. Beaufort West was gained. This is a pretty little village of five hundred inhabitants, but it has many more houses than are needed for the population resident. We are now in the very centre of the wool districts. Hither comes the plunder of the desolate Karoo and the sterile Gouff. The sheep farmers who make any prétension at all have their little "town house" in Beaufort, which is occupied once a quarter or so, when the *nachtmaal*, or sacrament, draws all good followers of Zwinglius to church. There are stores here of surprising extent, and the evidence of considerable wealth. Business is as yet mostly carried on by traders, who perambulate the country with miscellaneous goods, which they exchange with the farmers for sheep and skins. The storekeepers of Beaufort get the profit at each end of this transaction. They advance the goods at a price more or less monstrous, and they buy the trader's sheep and skins, on his return, for a new assortment. No wonder they wax fat. Sheep here will average 8*s.* to 12*s.* each: before the discovery of diamonds they were 5*s.* or 6*s.* The shearing time is April, but some old-fashioned spendthrifts get two fleeces a year; these, of course, are of inferior quality. At Beaufort the wild and naked Kaffir begins to make his appearance, children dispense with clothes, and your new driver wears an ostrich feather in his ragged hat.

Sixth day.—In the very comfortable inn we slept till 12.30 A.M., when the bugle sounded an advance. At 6.30 A.M., having passed in the dark a famous hunting ground for antelopes, reached Devinish's farm. We are now beyond the Gouff, and in

Digitized by Google

pastures that look fertile by comparison. The sight of a tree would not actually make you jump, though it might evoke a tear of tender reminiscence. Mr. Devinish has a large tract of corn land under irrigation, and the bright verdure of his crops is inexpressibly grateful. He is likewise a sheep and an ostrich farmer. It was my first opportunity of getting information as to this latest mode of earning fortunes. Our host proved communicative, and courteously showed me his birds, but I found the whole thing so simple, no information was needed. All difficulty was surmounted when the first batch of eggs had been hatched by some unrecorded benefactor of our kind. At present you buy a brood of tame ostriches as you buy chickens, at £5 to £9 apiece. They cost nothing to feed. The sole expense entailed is the building of a hedge to keep them in their paddock. In retired spots, where no startling incident is likely to frighten them, the farmer sends them forth like sheep to graze under charge of a little boy. In three years they gain their full plumage, and may be expected to return £4 to £6 worth of feathers per annum. They breed freely, and are not delicate to rear. We saw a hatch of seventeen, funny little brown fellows, quite tame, but shy, which one mother had given. From the moment of birth they go in for separate maintenance, and scratch and peck their living with vivacity. As yet their plumage is neither hair nor down, but something that resembles both of them, with an infusion of quill. This culture is very widely extending, as is natural; in no other pursuit are gains so large at so small risk.

If you do not buy the birds half-grown, it is difficult to get eggs. There is a very proper penalty of fifty pounds for robbing an ostrich nest within the colony. But when full-grown the female is easily induced to lay, and the young can scarcely be called delicate under experienced care. Nevertheless, it should be added that the feathers of these tame birds fetch a lower price. They cannot be plucked out, of course, and the young feather

Digitized by Google

growing underneath is apt to be deformed in pushing out what root of quill remains in the flesh after cutting. Nor is the plume so fine. The tame bird, however vast his paddock, cannot dash before the wind a breather of ten miles, his quills rustling and strengthening in the velocity of the race. Nor has he the inclination for these mad scurries. Wild animals there are none in his peaceful pastures, and to the face of man he has grown accustomed. But, for all drawbacks, I never heard of business so safe as ostrich farming, or so incredibly profitable.

Breakfasted, and left at 8 A.M. Crossing the damp bed of the Salt River just beyond had a desperate struggle with our team. They plunged all ways at once, and the leaders turned right round in harness, putting their heads where their tails should be. We all scrambled out in a monstrous hurry. Even the lame men—we had several of them now—bounded to the earth like peas. It was an awkward place for an overturn. But the refractory animals were slewed round, and on we went. The scenery now changed. We found ourselves winding through a succession of narrow plains, dusty, but green, which twisted in and out in endless chain between two mountain ranges. These were mostly flat at top, as though shaved down by a Titanic plane. Nature seems to have had great building schemes here; but something failed her, and she stopped the works half finished. Dropped in front of the main lines, here and there, is a low, conical hill of slatey shale, clothed in hot-looking pebbles containing iron. Outspanned in a plain when all the burning winds of Africa appeared to rendezvous. It was a hurricane of living heat.

Jackson's Farm, 12.30 P.M.—This is an extremely pretty place; fine mulberry trees enshade the door, a well-filled garden lies within a hedge of roses opposite; there is a pool, spring-fed, therein, and noble trees embower its bank. Mr. Jackson, I believe, is an industrious and enterprising man; but the glory of this vegetation belongs not to him. There is the strength of fifty

Digitized by Google

years in those stout branches. Next stage, 4.40 P.M., where we found not even the usual cup of coffee. Leaving it, we rode into the most violent and awful thunderstorm I had ever yet witnessed. Then I perceived how it was the rivers were so dreaded—the sloots were worn so deep, and the rocks so bare. Not twenty minutes the deluge lasted, but for that time—

"The earth was all a yell, the air was all a flame."

We were travelling through the plain that surrounds Victoria. The road had become a torrent. Again and again we had all to alight, knee-deep in mud and stream, to assist the mules. At length, tired of these mere alternations of misery, I set forth to walk, accompanied by another passenger. A tribe of jackals came sniffing round our heels, vanishing and reappearing, grey, light, and noiseless as four-footed ghosts; but we reached the village safely. By the way, my companion regaled me with the history of the flood that swept off half this settlement on February 27th, 1870. After such a storm as that we had just suffered, the great dam above the village gave way, a huge cataract of water burst down the hillside, through the kloof in which Victoria stands, and washed away, without an instant's check or warning, all the houses on one side the street through half its length. More than fifty lives were lost, some of them under circumstances that doubled the horror of their fate. There is a comfortable inn here; but we stopped only two hours.

Seventh day.—Left Victoria at midnight, with a boy driver, and a child to "lead." Our fellow-passenger, who horses this stage, prudently vanished before we took our seats. It was very soon apparent that our waggoners knew but little of their business. The horses all got mixed up anyhow. After much climbing up and down on the part of our young Jehu, much swearing and whip-cracking, much plunging of team and waggon, they set off. Presently we appeared to have entered a little grove, and then, looking out curiously, I perceived that another team was passing us so close, that the vehicle behind must certainly lock our

Digitized by Google

wheels. As I called out, there was suddenly a violent plunge and wrench, followed by a tempest of cries and oaths from the little drivers. We came to a stand, and it gradually became manifest that our leaders had turned back, and were moving towards the stable, when our waggon pointed in the other direction. All hands having descended to set things straight, we progressed with more or less of surprising incident till 2 A.M., when should have been a relay. A relay there was, indeed; but it chanced to be galloping loose about the veldt. There was nothing for it but to wait for daylight, sleeping anyhow. At 5.30 A.M. we started again, in a drizzle. Spytport 6.30 A.M. Outspanned on the open veldt 10.30 A.M. The mountains now fell back, and enlarged the plains. Locusts of a very gaudy uniform hung on every bush; their heads and wings were scarlet, bodies green and yellow. Secretary birds towered amongst the stumpy herbage by the path; bustards, more wary, stalked along the slopes out of gun range. There was abundance of marmots, and their burrows honeycombed the ground, which the night's rain had already clothed with thin, but vivid, green; so rapid is the vegetation of this land. Far away we saw a large white house, at which we did *not* stop. I do not recollect another incident of this sort during all the journey. Wonderfontein, 2.40 P.M., a lonely place, but wonderful indeed. Mirage here possesses all the distance; the horison is a long chain of lakes, in which both hills and trees are curiously reflected. Kuerfontein, where dwells the sullenest of churlish boers, 7.15 P.M.; travelling again 9 P.M.

Eighth day.—Working through the night, we reached Jackscaren 1.20 A.M. Here were provided us two boys, younger, if possible, than the last. As at Victoria, we came to grief in the very start, getting fixed somehow on a bank between two dams. This was perhaps the most miserable night of the journey. Every quarter of an hour our wretched doze was broken by the necessity of descending to push the wheels, to hold them back—to restrain them somehow from getting into further mischief on a

Digitized by Google

bank, or in a hole, where they had no business on earth. At 4.10 A.M. I resolved to walk. My ancles had begun to swell, and give some slight pain. One of us was in a terrible state from this cause, his limbs double their size, and blotched with discolourations, another suffered severely, and a third was lame. A three hours' walk to Schinderspan cured my case; but the others were too far gone for the remedy. These swellings are quite usual. After breakfast, and a doze at Schinderspan—the latter upon bedsteads of brick, by-the-bye—we started at 11.5 A.M.; 1.30 P.M. saw *springbok* antelope for the first time—of which more hereafter—at Brack River. The broad, deep bed of the stream was dry; on the other bank a number of boers from Caledon were encamped. This was their fifty-first day out; but they had travelled even more leisurely than usual. They proved to be much more civilised than the inland boers, as was natural; but misfortune, and the consciousness of "being done," depressed their spirits. Thirteen oxen had already died upon the way, and five more could not be expected to live; and then they had contracted to carry freight to the fields for 27*s.* the hundred pounds, a handsome figure enough, but 5*s.* under the market rate at that time. Having discovered this fact, they grieved. Kalkekraal 6.25 P.M., which lies at the distance of twenty-four miles from Schinderspan. Our travel here was at the rate of two miles the hour! Walked across the dry bed of Bierblei River, and roused a lynx which scurried off at speed. The ground here is dreadfully cut up with sloots, or rain-channels. These so-called rivers mostly are but main drains. There is not a spring in all their course, and a week of flood is followed by a month of thirst. At Kalkekraal the people appeared to be starving. They had no meat, bread, or coffee for themselves, nor forage for the horses. From boers on the trek we bought some *biltongue*, or flesh sun-dried, which was very good. Starting again in the darkness, we lost the road. Our driver, a competent man, advised stopping; but the guard happened to be drunk, and he insisted on progress.

Digitized by Google

We drove into a ditch, and hung suspended. The driver confessed he didn't know where he was. Under these circumstances there ensued a mutiny, and the passengers all alighted. The guard drove on, narrowly escaping an overturn. The passengers meekly followed. Decidedly that guard knew his fellow-countrymen. We got into the waggon again, under dignified protest, and travelled, till the leading horses were observed, or felt, to take a flying leap. Investigation showed them to have cleared a sloot some five feet deep which ran across the veldt. Having shown his authority, the guard now yielded. We rolled ourselves in rugs upon the ground, and slept till daylight. This befell about 4.30 A.M., when the driver was missed.

Ninth day.—Though black, he had a spirit more independent than the gentlemen of Capetown, and so had left the drunken guard to his new functions. After much trouble, we got round the sloot, discovered the road, and made Karie-dam, 6.15 A.M. The dwelling-room of the farmer here was adorned with labels of Colman's mustard, and some one else's cod-liver oil, alternately pasted on the wall at intervals, by way of picture. One had a fine glow of colour, and the other bore a life-size portrait of a cod-fish, savoury to behold. We should have met the next down waggon long since; but news had come to this place of a catastrophe somewhere. There is much water at Karie-dam, both spring and pool. In the neighbourhood we saw immense herds of springbok. Our team was dreadfully bad and wearied. The mules fell every instant, and two or three would be on the ground at once—a brutal sight. I think if we had had the contractor there, he might have run some risk of being harnessed in place of the poor things thus ill treated, unless, that is, he had talked big, and been a little drunk, when the gentlemen passengers would probably have offered him every civility. Addison's farm, 12.25 P.M. Here it was found that the team due to us had gone to help the other waggon, which is now three days late. It had so stuck and suffered, that the contractor was sending it on with oxen.

Digitized by Google

We could but wait for events. Though Mr. Addison has only been five years on this spot, he has made of it something which is comparatively comfortable. The situation is, and must be, unutterably bare until the trees grow up. But a substantial house of the old-fashioned red brick has been erected, garden planted and walled in, wells dug, and an elaborate system of irrigation made. There are flowers, vegetables, and fruits, neatly disposed in beds, the borders whereof are water channels. Mr. Addison can boast a pump, and even two! The small beginnings of an avenue are visible before his house, in the shape of flourishing aloes. Verily is this an enterprising man, and a marvel of the country!

After dinner, a desultory council formed itself. Some hours of listless argument demonstrated that we must either pass the night here, or push on with Mr. Addison's private team. At length it was so arranged. Eight handsome and spirited horses were driven up from the veldt, and inspanned to our waggon. At the moment of starting, the other party arrived. This caused a long delay. Friends were recognised amongst the down passengers, and gossip must be interchanged. We had to answer the eager query, "What's the price of 'offcolour?'" And they were pressed with anxious questions as to the prospects of digging. The report was most favourable. Every man had a pocket full of stones, and a story yet more dazzling. The report of a commando from the Free State began to be laughed at. Boers swore and blustered, but the Volksraad showed more common sense, and Mr. Brand is a prudent man. At 5.30 P.M., we got away, and our horses took us to Hopetown in excellent form. On the way, I saw that peculiar phenomenon of the country, a "pan." This was a small one, perhaps not above an acre in extent. As the name imports, it is a circular depression in the level of the veldt, with earthy bottom and sides. There are no signs as yet legible to explain the cause of such formation. Some have suggested the action of a *geyser*, or of a mud spring. Dutoitspan is the most famous

Digitized by Google

example. Hopetown, 7.45 P.M., and supper and bed at the inn.

Tenth day.—I visited this pretty village so often during my stay on the fields, there is no need to prolong the chapter by description of it here. We left about 8.45 A.M. About half a mile to the northward, flows the Orange River, a broad and rapid stream, which takes that name from the colour of its waters. Though sometimes so swollen as to outtop the lofty banks of mud which bound it, and even to flood the plains above, it has been reduced by drought, within the memory of man, to a series of scanty pools. In general, the Orange flows at a depth of thirty feet, over a breadth of three hundred yards at this point. The current is extraordinarily strong. Banks not less than sixty feet in height, bearing a growth of willow trees, acacias, and thorny bush, restrain its ravages. It flows, in fact, through a "cutting," as do all South African rivers. There are no rocks nor clays generally to divert the flood, which washes out its course through the crumbling sand. Each year the chasm deepens, until, in some great deluge, the cliff undermined gives way, and blocks the channel, and thrusts off the stream to work its way elsewhere. At various points on the Orange are ferries, three I think, two of which have been established for the trade created by the diamond fields. The third is but a novelty. Until a very short time ago, there was only a row-boat on this dangerous stream, and travellers used to take their vehicles to pieces for ferrying over. There is much talk of a bridge at Hopetown, but I have little expectation of such improvements in our time. The pont fare is 5*s.* per horse in the travellers' team, and 2*s.* 6*d.* for oxen.

On the other side the river, we enter that territory of Albania, so long disputed between Waterboer and the Free State. It is included in the recent annexation. On the further bank were found a party of wild Kaffirs, magnificent figures of men, purple black, with pleasant faces. They laughed and jested amongst themselves with that good-humoured ease peculiar to the African. Every man

Digitized by Google

had an excellent rifle, tower-marked, and plenty of ammunition. I could not but read in their faces, merry and good-natured as they were now, the signs of a spirit quickly roused, and dangerous whilst it lasted. Their foaming excitement in the dance was proof of this. But nothing could be more genial than their behaviour towards us, and towards each other, and they seemed half-scornfully surprised at the present of a sixpence to the best dancer. These were Basutos, but I never after saw any of that tribe quite so wild. They were clothed, as one may say, in an ostrich feather, a riband, and a gun. At 12.45 P.M. outspanned on a blazing plain as white as chalk, surrounded by tame ostriches. They paid us no heed at all, but wandered to and fro, picking and scratching, under charge of a Hottentot infant, not taller than their knees. He tapped their legs sometimes, when roaming beyond the march, and they rejoined the straggling procession.

Scholtzfontein, 5.35 P.M. Here there is a great change of scenery. The pale sand vanishes. The eternal scrub shoots up to dignity. On a red earth arise great crops of grass, mighty thin indeed, by English model, but tall, and green, and wavy in the wind. Low trees appear. In every nook between the polished peebles, which are heaped to the size of hills, some form of plant displays a tinge of green. There were parts quite pretty, where the track lay between two piles of stone, plumed with acacia and tufted grasses. The boer farmer of Scholtzfontein deserves a notice for his courtesy. He was a sheep-owner, grazier, and horse-breeder. His stock consisted of 2,400 sheep, 130 cattle, and 70 horses. He might also have been supposed a dog-breeder, seeing what troops of hounds played round the house. But a week since, three of them had killed a fine leopard, and we were assured that one noble fellow had shown himself capable of tackling such a foe single-jawed. This man belonged to a party not so uncommon in the Free State as their politicians would have us believe. Though firmly convinced that his country's title to Albania rests upon grounds beyond disproof, he is more than willing to resume

Digitized by Google

his allegiance to her Majesty;—"resume" is the proper word, for these Free Staters, as I shall have occasion to show, never have been released from their duty as British subjects. He complains bitterly of the meddlesome and greedy action of the Free State against its neighbours, Kaffir and Transvaalite. He himself had nothing to gain by the quarrel with the Basutos, but he had been "commandeered," and forced to serve at his own expense nearly twelve months. This campaign had cost him £100 in cash, besides the loss, anxiety, and risk which so long absence from home entails. The regular taxation, too, was much beyond Colonial standards. It is true that most boers do not pay. A poll-tax of £1, a police rate of like amount, and £3 for land-tax, make up a sum greatly superior to that he now expected.

We got away at 6 P.M., outspanned on the veldt 7.45. P.M., inspanned again 9.25 P.M., and reached Duploitsberg 12.30 A.M.

Eleventh day.—It was now too late to rouse the sleepy boers, so we munched a morsel of divers provisions, and lay down around the waggon. Monstrous dogs slept with us, or chased wild beasts about with furious barking, but all domestic animals are singularly tame, excepting on the fields. At 6.30 A.M., crossed the Riet River. The grassy plains continue, but with a fine white soil. Much of the ground here is *suur*, or sour veldt; it will bear oxen and antelopes, of which there was abundance in sight, but not sheep generally. Flat-bottomed mountains all round the horizon. Comering's dam 10.30 A.M., and scrubby waste again. Kadloff's 1.35 P.M., and then, at 3.45 P.M., last stage of all that ends this history, PNIEL.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

THE CAMP OF PNIEL.

A desolate scene—Pniel of two years ago—Deserted claims—Jardine's hotel—Diggers and old acquaintances—Our new inspectors—Dinner—Feelings and wishes of the diggers at this time.

November 19th, 1872.

PNIEL could not be called a town, for it has but a few hundred of inhabitants. Village it is not, for great interests concentrate there; none could describe it as a settlement, seeing no person or thing therein is settled; and, though the head and official centre of an enormous district, it would be folly to talk of it as a metropolis. Governments are not generally celebrated for happiness in description, but our authorities at Capetown have certainly been fortunate in their title for such places as this. Pniel, by official designation, is a "camp." Just a camp it is, indeed, and one very disorderly. Standing on the deep declivity which slopes downwards to the Vaal, from the brow thereof a traveller looks down on such a tossed and tumbled scene as the deserted bivouac of a marauding army may present, after the troops have left, and the camp followers are still packing. For the glory of Pniel has fled. I have seen in a photograph the picture of its high days. Not in the lordly diggings to which I am bound can one behold the likeness of that wonder. An observer here could stand upon the crest and survey all the sea of tents at once, the hive of men, chequer of claims, loud, busy river flowing between the trees, and populous heights of Klipdrift opposite. The natural scene is still before us visible, but its red earth is bare, its pyramids of high-piled stones standing like cairns for the

Digitized by Google

departed. All the slope is pocked with holes, some big and deep enough to bury the largest of our stores, some shallow and small as an infant's grave; the similitudes are rather lugubrious, but lesser diamond fields are more like rude and careless cemeteries than aught else I think of. Round each claim, big or little, is the heap of pebbles. Earth has a deep red tone. Two or three pathways, much encroached upon, wind downwards to the shingly strand. Another, wider, and bordered by piles of stone, runs parallel to the river, beneath the shade of lofty willow trees. On narrow platforms between the holes, where the digger has not been tempted to insert his pick, stands a gipsy tent, with people white or black loafing about the doorway. Here and there is a "canteen" of dirty canvas, or a plank-built "store" with roof of corrugated iron. But such habitations are rare. Rarer still is the "sorting table." Men pass up and down the path with buckets now and then. A slender stream of passengers goes down the road that leads one to the ferry. A stranger wanders, with meandering and anxious step, amidst the yawning labyrinth of pitfalls. How different is this picture from the photograph! Five thousand workers made the place to swarm two years ago. And now there are not fifty claims in use. The only hotel remaining is "Jardine's." Thither we drive. It stands almost upon the summit of the slope, beside a street deep in ruddy sand, which ends abruptly, on the brink of a headlong pit thirty yards beyond. Jardine's was the first "hotel" erected. It is a straggling chain of rooms, one story of course, without windows, but abundantly supplied with doors. The walls are wood, and the roof iron. In the midst is a store and bar, never destitute of custom. On one side thereof lies a dining shed, on the other a nondescript apartment containing beds and chairs, a table, a carpet, guns, harness, picks, baggage, heaven knows what. It may be eighteen feet by twelve, and in it I have seen fourteen "first class" guests asleep. Each night the floor is laid with mattresses, packed so close one cannot choose but tread on

Digitized by Google

them. Beyond are two tiny compartments for married folk, divided from the bachelors by walls of torn green baize. Over the other side the dining shed lies a room of six beds, and across the street a building with as many more. Multiply them by two, and calculate the area of flooring all through the house; by this means you might discover the capacity of accommodation in Jardine's hotel. But the extent of the host's good-nature passes computation.

We are received with the courteous but indifferent welcome which, for my part, I like in an innkeeper. What a nuisance must have been that fussy greeting which some regret! After all, I do *not* feel any interest in my Boniface, and he feels none in me. We have business relations together. Be they carried out in an honest, polite, and business-like fashion; the reasonable man on both sides is contented. But the composure of Mr. Jardine was a proof how common are strangers in this latitude. I entered the bar. At the counter stood a gentleman known to me for years in London, the swellest of swells. Last I parted with him in Paris, on the evening of September 3rd, when all the gay city was throbbing with the *ça ira*, and tempestuous shouts for *la dechéance* drowned our farewell Now, black with sun-burn, collarless, bare-armed, unshorn, he puffed coarse boer tobacco from a short clay pipe, and bargained the sale of his wealthy claim with an aristocratic youth still spick and span as Bond Street. Whilst exchanging a hearty welcome with this old friend, two men entered the doorway, and seated themselves upon a pile of cheeses. The whisper passed round that these were "our new Inspectors," and every one turned to stare at those who held such important office. One of them was the son and heir of a Scotch baronet, and in the other I recognise an old acquaintance whom likewise I had met during that concourse of the desperate in Paris, '70. He was then canvassing for a commission in the Foreign Legion. This berth of "Sub-Inspector in the district of Pniel" was pleasanter by far than the glittering destiny

Digitized by Google

he missed. It greatly comforted the exile to give ear whilst I detailed the heroism and the fate of those he had tried to join. How gleefully does the cynic recollect that the noble deeds and death of those poor outcasts of all nations have been appropriated by the Pope's Zouaves!

Cookery at Jardine's is an art reduced to its earliest elements. Roast and boiled we had, at six punctually. A numerous company sat down, of many degrees and divers nationality. The only female form was that of a buttery maiden, who carried plates and dishes. Perfect decorum ruled. There is nothing here of Australian brutality; the rowdy element does not exist. As regards costume and such matters, the absence of collars and waistcoats, the presence of a broad belt and sheath knife at the waist, and a general dingy tone about the garments, are all one can see of distinctive signs. But it must be remembered that Pneil is a sanatorium. Invalids who can afford it come here to pick up strength, fleeing the hot and poisonous whirlwinds of Dutoitspan for the pleasant coolness of the river. It is a place slightly more expensive than the dry diggings. Board and lodging are at the same most reasonable figure—10*s.* 6*d.* a day; but luxuries are less attainable and dearer. Commerce learns lessons more quickly than do governments; every farmer's boy and teamster knows that Dutoitspan lies *between* the colony and Pneil, not beyond. To the dry diggings, therefore, his load is bound, and the river camps depend on a chance supply from northwards. Fish, however, can be had here, either the monstrous *barba* or the succulent "white fish." Under an African sun these matters will not travel.

The mode of working at these river diggings, and the life there, I shall defer to a later page, seeing I had no time to learn their secrets on this visit, and also remembering that the "Diamond Fields" are really, now, the dry diggings, Dutoitspan New Rush, Old de Beers, Bultfontein, and Alexandersfontein. To them I hasten.

Digitized by Google

A prominent topic at table was the impending "commando" of the Free State. People did not quite know whether to laugh or to be alarmed at the report that Mr. Brand had ordered all his boers to keep their war-horse and their rifle ready. In the meantime, they used the word in a joking fashion. Bread was commandeered, and the buttery waitress held to service. Then there was talk of diamonds unending—Smith had discovered a two-hundred caret. That low Jew Kaupman had humbugged a boer into selling a fifty-carat for as many pounds. Jones's great "glassy stone" had exploded in the night; luckless man! he went to bed with a single perfect star within his belt, and woke to find it burst into a worthless constellation.* Then there were the arguments, semi-scientific, about the *rationale* of diamonds, and the prospect of future fields. This is a subject of which diggers never tire. Each man has his theory, which he does not himself believe, perhaps, but is eager to argue. There was but one point on which the party was agreed—contempt for the professional geologist. In this opinion I cannot but admit my entire concurrence, limiting it only to the persons who have ventured to state their views. What Mr. Dunn says in print, we have already noticed. Mr. Elliott flatly denied the existence of diamonds at all. Mr. Tobin is credibly reported to have reached the conclusion that ostriches carried our treasures to the spot. Nor were the experts more fortunate. Mr. Gregory, sent out by Mr. Emanuel to survey the ground, published in the *Times* his unutterably foolish judgment that South Africa will not pay as a diamond digging. Mr. Coster, the renowned of Amsterdam and London, comes out in person to inspect, parades the country in imperial state, and "concludes" the matter is not worth his notice. Shall we marvel that the digger has lost faith in reputations? He himself has learnt such lessons as have taught him this great fact—no man at present can predict where diamonds will be found. Every

* Of these exploding diamonds, and kindred matters, I shall tell in a chapter devoted to eccentricities of the sort.

Digitized by Google

visible condition of a spot where they abound is realised some yards, or miles, or leagues away; but not a stone rewards the poor "prospecter." But I wander somewhat in transcribing these matters here. They will receive a chapter to themselves in proper course.

I found the Commissioners who were to regulate affairs in Griqualand West had already arrived, together with most of their officials. It was not intended, however, to open the Courts of Law yet awhile. The annexation had been formally made, with evidences of satisfaction from the diggers, but without enthusiasm. The fact is, this matter had been thoroughly "discounted." Every one knew it must take place. Without such confidence, the digging population would long since have defied the Free State. They were quite content to endure for a little while a government which gave them their own way most absolutely, and only robbed or harassed the landowners; but it was on the avowed condition that England would step in as soon as decently she could. Failing that, a republic self-constituted, with "President Parker" to rule in such fashion and for such time as suited the majority, was the programme. But I would not have it supposed, either, that the diggers are remarkable for loyalty. Emphatically they were not so, even when I arrived on the fields, and before I left there was something like positive treason in the air. No easy task is it to probe the feelings of a busy, eager, reckless population such as this. The results are apparent, indeed they show themselves with something more than candour; but the process of thought amongst an inadhesive crowd is long and difficult to trace. Now, standing upon the edge of these wonderful fields, it appears to me the proper moment for setting forth the history of them. In that curious tale will be found the circumstances that made men listless in this matter of annexation at the first, and has finally bred in them a feeling of positive discontent.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORY OF THE DIAMOND FIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA, AND CONSIDERATIONS ON THE POLICY OF GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE DIGGING POPULATION AND THE PROPRIETORS OF THE SOIL.

Ancient knowledge of the diamond fields—Immemorial use of diamonds by Bushmen — The rediscovery — The Hopetown diamond—The Star of South Africa—The rush to the Vaal banks—Mr. Gregory's report to Emanuel—Mr. Coster's progress—Rapid growth of the population—Manner of self-government—Rules—Mr. President Parker—The eccentricities of his rule—Arrival of Mr. Campbell, Civil Commissioner—Necessity of his appointment—The Diamond Field Republic scheme—Commands of the Transvaal at Hebron—First rumours of Dutoitspan—Rushing of that farm—Establishment of the London and South African Exploration Company—Of the Hopetown Diamond Company—Project of law in the Orange Free State *Volksraad*—The confiscation decree—Premature divulging of the law, which causes the rush of Bultfontein—Bultfontein brought under the committee of Dutoitspan—What is meant by the landowners' concurrence — May 15th, 1871—Appointment of Mr. Trutter by the Free State—The annexation—The proclamations—Article 29 of No. 71—Serious loss to proprietors under new system—The officials sent to West Griqualand—The question of wells.

THE existence of diamonds in South Africa had been several times asserted before the English conquest of Cape Colony. It was so far accredited in the middle of the last century that the words, "Here be diamonds," are to be seen inscribed across our modern territory of Griqualand West, in a mission-map of 1750 or thereabouts. I believe it to be a truth, also, that the probability of such discoveries in this district had been pointed out by various men of science, the late Sir Roderick Murchison amongst others. In fact, the old Dutch residents of Capetown appear to have been quite astir upon the matter on several occasions;

Digitized by Google

but as years passed on the ancient rumour died away. Men had to search back for memories long buried when Governor Wodehouse set the colony agog by exhibiting the "Hopetown diamond" in 1867. That Bushmen, Corannas, and other tribes of low condition used the gem mechanically from immemorial time seems to be quite ascertained. They still remember how their fathers made periodical visits to the rivers of West Griqualand, seeking diamonds to bore their "weighting stones."

The re-discovery, however, took place in 1867. At that date, a shrewd trader named Niekirk, passing through a country forty miles or so to the west of Hopetown, saw the children of a boer called Jacobs playing with pebbles, picked up along the banks of the neighbouring Orange. Struck with the appearance of one among their playthings, Niekirk told *vrouw* Jacobs that it reminded him of the white shining stones mentioned in the Bible. As he uttered the words, an ostrich-hunter named O'Reilly chanced to pass the doorway of the house. He overheard, entered, and was also impressed. Vague ideas of a diamond—which none of the three had ever seen—passed through their minds. They tried the pebble upon glass, scratching the sash all over, as I have seen it at this day. A bargain was struck. O'Reilly took the stone for sale, and each of the parties present was to share. At Capetown, upon the verdict of Dr. Atherstone, Sir P. E. Wodehouse gave £500 for it. The news spread fast. At the moment of this discovery there was something exceeding a panic in the colony. Wool, its staple product, was at a hopelessly low quotation. A murrain was thinning the sheep. Never had merchants known such a time of anxiety, and no hope was visible. The story of the trader, corroborated by actual inspection of his treasure, thus excited more active stir than it would have made at any other time. People began to study every foot of the ground. The next generation of colonists will certainly be round-shouldered, for the quick eyes of children were found to be peculiarly useful in the search. Then other stones turned up, the most of them bought

Digitized by Google

from natives, in whose hands they had lain for many years, perhaps centuries. In 1868 several were picked up along the banks of the Vaal about Pniel, and then the rush begun. But as yet it was mere surface seeking. Early next year a Hottentot shepherd, named Swartzboy, brought to Mr. Gers' store, at the Hook, a gem of 83½ carats, the "Star of South Africa," wide-famed. In Mr. Gers' absence, his shopman did not like to risk the £200 worth of goods demanded. Swartzboy passed on to the farm of that same Niekirk above mentioned. Here he demanded £400, which Niekirk ultimately paid, receiving £12,000 from Messrs. Lilienfeld the same day. The diamond was passed to Capetown, and all the colony rose. But not for twelve months more did "digging" begin. On January 7, 1870, Captain Rolleston and his party washed out their first diamond at Pniel, on the lands claimed by the Berlin Mission. Within three months there were 5,000 people digging here. Hebron, Gong-Gong, Moonlight Rush, and a score of wealthy spots, soon revealed their treasures. The South African diamond fields henceforth were established; but of such "pockets" as Dutoitspan and New Rush none yet had any inkling.

The fields were established as a fact in the colony, but not yet at home. Mr. Harry Emanuel sent out a professed expert, Mr. Gregory, to report upon them, and his foolish haste in discrediting their wealth caused serious loss to English merchants. The diggers only laughed, and showed each other their glittering prizes. Mr. Coster, of Amsterdam, came out, and he also went back incredulous. But the diggings grew and grew. The necessity of some system of government amongst the crowd became apparent. The Orange River Free State claimed jurisdiction over the larger space, and the Transvaal Republic exercised rights over the remainder. Practically there was no government at all. The inhabitants of the district, even had they not been employed in digging with all their might, could have done no police duty for their own protection, seeing they were scattered in farm-houses

Digitized by Google

twenty miles or so apart. Fortunately these early diggers were mostly boers, men sober, stupid, hardworking, easy to govern. Many of them had their families, and nearly all lived as respectably as possible. This character may still be given to the mass of diggers. There are bad fellows amongst them, and plenty of drinking always; but no such scenes have ever been witnessed as made the Australian and Californian fields a by-word. Each little colony of diggers chose its own committee of government, and passed its own rules, the greater part of which were practically identical.* They were framed on the model of those in use at the Australian fields. Thirty feet square was and is the measure of a "claim," and not more than two claims could be held by one person. The reward for discovering a new field was a grant of four claims to the finder. At first, twenty-five per cent. of the gems was paid, or was professedly paid to the Berlin missionaries of Pniel; but afterwards the Committee levied a digging fee of 10*s.* a month. From the amount thus collected they deducted police and other charges, paying a variable proportion to the ground landlord. Thus arranged, things worked with tolerable smoothness.

Supreme nominee over all the river camps around Pniel ruled Mr. President Parker. This gentleman was, I believe, a sailor, which employment he deserted to embark in trading. Mr. Parker was on the spot when the discovery of diamonds took place, and his acquaintance with boers and natives all around enabled him to speculate under considerable advantages. After a time, enlivened with many strange and amusing adventures, he began to dig, and it may, perhaps, be a question whether Mr. Parker or Captain Rolleston was first to discover the presence of diamonds below the surface. The earliest report in writing of such dis-

* In the Appendix I give as an example the regulations for Dutoitspan digging, which were passed with the concurrence of the proprietors on May 15, 1871. When one speaks of concurrence, it is not to be supposed that the proprietors had any choice, or approved the rules.

Digitized by Google

covery is a letter addressed by the former gentleman to Mr. Webb. However it be, Mr. Parker was not long in acquiring very great influence. All the camp yielded authority to him, and passed the title of President which he affected. He met the chief of the South African Republic upon such easy terms of equality, the latter hastily fled to realms where his supremacy was uncontested. The chief executioner, tormentor, and *maître des hautes œuvres* of the president was an ex-butcher. By this official Parker's sentences were resolutely carried out. Ducking in the Vaal may be considered the lightest of them. The "cat" came next. More terrible was the sentence of "dragging through the river," performed on a man bound head and heels by ruffians on either bank. Last of all was the Spread-Eagle, in which the culprit was extended flat, hands and feet staked down, and so exposed to the angry sun.

But, in justice to Mr. Parker and his counsellors, whom it is now the fashion to ridicule, I shall declare that one whisper of cruelty, other than these eccentric punishments, never reached my ears. They did many foolish acts, and perhaps committed some wrongs. It may not be well to ask closely which way their revenue all went. But their procedure answered the demands upon it. No criminal lost his life, and no honest man felt terror. There were, during my stay, thousands of educated and respectable men who sighed for the good old times when "The Diggers' Mutual Protection Society" held its meetings in Klipdrift, and Mr. President Parker kept such propriety in the camp as has not since been known.

This happy state of things ceased when Mr. Campbell was appointed Civil Commissioner for the lands disputed between Waterboer and the Transvaal. This nomination was justified upon the grounds of mere necessity, nor without the best reason. Mr. Parker had shown judgment, prudence, and loyalty in most of his public acts;—it would be easy to find the ridiculous point of sight in his conduct, but I intend not to look for it;—but

Digitized by Google

there were many advocates of a "Diamond Field Republic" scheme. It was seriously urged and discussed. The Transvaal could not have offered one month's serious resistance to the execution. There were probably as many grown males, all armed, under Mr. Parker's rule as the whole population under Mr. Prætorius. But it is evident, in the first place, that subjects of Her Majesty, within lands claimed by her officers, or even without, could not be allowed to put off their allegiance. And, in the second place, the earliest fruit of the republic would have been war exterior and internal, with the Transvaal, and the Free State—probably with the boer element in its own ranks. In fact, the mere suggestion of the Diggers' Republic could not be entertained. And so Mr. Campbell was sent up to assume temporary jurisdiction over British subjects, and Mr. Parker showed his usual good sense in retiring cheerfully. The Transvaal did not imitate this wise example. Prætorius sent down a large commando to Klipdrift, which stayed a month "in observation," much jeered and chaffed by the diggers. At the end of that time it withdrew.

In December, 1870, the dry diggings first were heard of. Hitherto, the search for diamonds had been only carried on by river banks, and the gems discovered there had been washed down in ancient floods from some *kopje*, or dry mine, now perhaps worn away. In two years of such digging, at a score of places, the yield had not been greater than £300,000, as Mr. Webb computed. This is indeed an astonishing figure, all circumstances considered, but the time draws near when the same amount will be returned as the *monthly average* in Custom House reports at Capetown.

In December, then, it was whispered that the children of Dutoit, a boer living at Dorstfontein—so well known now by the name of Dutoitspan—were in the habit of picking up diamonds on their father's farm. There is no river near to this place. The Modder flows twenty miles away on one side, the Vaal twenty-

Digitized by Google

five miles on another. Nothing more near, nor are there the minutest traces of water anciently approaching the neighbourhood. To those who believed the rumour, it was evident that diamond digging was henceforth to enter on a novel phase. The gem would be sought in the bed where nature created it. But few believed—not till the end of January did the crowd put faith. About that time the farm was "rushed," an expressive word, though sinister to the ears of a landed proprietor nowadays. It signifies that diggers swarmed to the spot in such throngs as to render merely foolish any resistance a proprietor might meditate. But the simple boer who owned Dutoitspan never dreamed of such a thing. He only sat in staring amaze at the endless train of carts and waggons and foot travellers that filed past him. None of them troubled about the landlord—the committee must deal with such offensive people; so they blithely measured out Dutoit's ground, got out their picks and shovels, and set to work. Some cunning fellows worked round the bewildered Dutchman, and obtained from him concessions which have given much trouble since. For the sum of 7*s.* 6*d.* they secured the freehold of a claim, with the right to work it for ever. The greater part, not so clever and more hasty, were content to pay 10*s.* a month for license. But Dutoit found all this confusion and tumult too exciting. He looked round for some one to relieve him entirely from the bother, by purchasing his land out and out. Such an one was easily found, and the farm passed into English hands, March, 1871. The purchaser was an association called the "London and South African Exploration Company."

Almost as early as the discovery of diamonds on Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, which actually adjoins it, had attracted the notice of some colonial capitalists. They formed a small company, under the title of the Hopetown Diamond Company, and acquired the farm in 1871. When purchased they imported a number of Kaffirs, and quietly began to dig, with satisfactory results. This action was bitterly resented by the Dutoitspan Committee, as

Digitized by Google

forbidden by their laws and regulations, but it had not yet come to a principle, avowed and defended, that the landed proprietor should only possess the ground he had bought and paid for in so far as the diggers chose to permit him. So, Dutoitspan being already "rushed," and therefore lost to him as a diamond mine, Mr. Webb, who represented both companies, the London and South African at Dutoitspan, and the Hopetown Diamond at Bultfontein, contented himself with what he could find in the poorer kopje.

The Dutoitspan diggers suffered him to enjoy this fragment of his properties. But in the meantime the Orange Free State had been cogitating. Its notables proceeded with Dutch slowness, but their ultimate decision was startling enough. Taking all the matter into consideration, the *Volksraad*, or Parliament, which, as the reader will recollect, claimed and at this time exercised full rights over this disputed territory, found no better resource than to confirm the diggers' rules, with certain additions of their own. They ordained that all lands on which diamonds or precious minerals had been or might be found should be open to the public on payment of 10*s.* a month for each claim; that the State should have the option of purchasing such lands on its own account at the uniform rate of 10*s.* per acre, compulsorily; that the diggers' committees, and the regulations made by them, should have the force of law; that 10 per cent. of the revenue derived by the landowner should be paid to such committee for the charges of police and health, and the salary of the members; and that 5*s.* of each 10*s.*, one-half the proceeds of the license fee, should be paid to the State by the owners of the soil. Thus, by a stroke of the pen, private proprietors, who had done nothing more amiss than to buy land which contained diamonds, were suddenly cut down 60 per cent of their revenue! *

The owners of Dutoitspan and Bultfontein protested in the strongest terms against this confiscation. They appealed to all

* The text of this decree will be found in the Appendix.

Digitized by Google

civilised law and custom, rashly staking their faith that an English Government would have its hair on end at the mere thought. In vain; they were not even allowed the usual time of grace. A member of the Executive or Cabinet of the Free State, interested in the success of his son, who was digging at Dutoitspan, sent an express from Bloemfontein by night, to tell him what manner of law had passed in secret session. The news spread like wild-fire. There was yet a fortnight's interval before the new legislation came into effect, but that too-eager parent deprived the proprietors of Bultfontein even of this delay. He wished, of course, to secure his son an early choice of claim, but the youth proved unworthy of such a stock, and let out his secret. At dawn Mr. Webb and his household were awakened by a desperate clamour. The insatiable digger, with Dutoitspan scarce yet scratched by pick or shovel, had "rushed" Bultfontein also. Claims were marked up to Mr. Webb's very doorway. They used the house-wall as a boundary. Big, rough fellows were tearing about with pegs in their hands, wrangling, fighting, rejoicing over the spoil. Others drove off, with many a curse and blow, the Kaffirs who had been working for proprietors' benefit. Henceforward they were to have no right to their own diamonds, excepting in two claims only.

Mr. Webb and two or three staunch friends struggled through the mob, amidst curses and threats. They attempted to plead for some small grace. They tried to point out that, after all, the land was theirs—paid for with their money, and at no mean price. But it was all useless. The diggers, who hated and derided the Free State, appealed to the law just passed by its *Volksraad*, though it had not yet been published. Active measures then were taken at the greatest personal risk. The upholders of justice drew out the pegs immediately surrounding the house. One huge fellow swore he would drive his pick through Mr. Webb's foot if he dared obliterate his claim-mark. Three times the line was made, and three times was it gallantly

Digitized by Google

smoothed out. The protected of the Free State howled and yelled at the little band. They threatened to hang Mr. Webb and his friends on Bultfontein tree. But a compromise was at length effected by some committee-men, who had no immediate interest in the matter. Sixty feet all round the house was reserved to the proprietors, and those who had marked out claims within that area growlingly withdrew. As to the remaining acres of Bultfontein farm, fifteen thousand or so, these were to be accounted gone, lost, from that hour, so far as diamonds are concerned. Not a scoundrel in the world but possessed for the future an equal field with the poor proprietors, and vastly more favour. He at least kept what he made, having as good a right to work as any one; the proprietor must return 60 per cent. of what sums were paid him. Earnestly did Mr. Webb and his partners long for the English annexation. What they obtained by this change, when it came, I shall shortly have to point out.

Let me interrupt myself a moment here. I do not doubt that the most violent of those who rushed Bultfontein may have been a man quite respectable in ordinary life. I have met dozens who were present, gentlemen quite beyond suspicion of ruffianly behaviour—in a general way. Had they not been so eagerly interested, or had the Free State not passed such a monstrous law, to seize a man's property against his will, and bar him up at his own doorway, would have seemed an act without excuse, to be shuddered at. But, as they say, diamond digging is not to be carried on under ordinary law.

Thus was Bultfontein brought under the "Rules and Regulations of the Dorstfontein (*i.e.* Dutoitspan) diggings." Of these rules it is not necessary to say much. They will be found in the Appendix. The reader will notice how completely the proprietor is ignored. He has no privileges. He may not work more than two claims. His land is the diggers'. Of what he takes from it, 10 per cent. shall go to the committee; and the Government, subsequently, robs him of 50 more.

Digitized by Google

There is a point, however, which the reader cannot fail to observe, in perusing the very first paragraph of this document. It contains "The Rules and Regulations framed and agreed upon between Martin Lilienfeld and Henry Barlow Webb, acting on behalf of the proprietors of Dorstfontein, and the following" diggers. This is a very strong point with Mr. Webb's opponents. They say, "You consented to abdicate any rights you possessed." As truly does a man abdicate the right to his watch when threatened with a hedgestake. As truly does a man abdicate the right to the nineteen shillings remaining, when he picks up two sixpences dropped by the thief who had just stolen from him a sovereign. Mr. Webb tells me it was under actual duresse that he consented to sign the articles; fear of bodily violence, and dread—something more certain than dread—that he would get nothing if he did not sign. The treaty was concluded on May 15th, 1871. It was in May that the diggers "rushed" Bultfontein, and the new Free State law was prematurely set in operation. Within twenty-four hours of that event, Mr. Webb repudiated a bargain so suicidal under the new circumstances, and registered his solemn protest against any conclusions that might be drawn in law from his helpless compliance. But the protest remained without effect, of course. One half of the digging license was henceforth paid to the Free State Government, and 10 per cent. of the gross revenue to the committee.

So things went on till the British annexation. The Free State had long ago appointed, October 6th, 1870, Mr. Trutter as their civil commissioner and magistrate. This gentleman moved from Pniel to Dutoitspan when the rush took place, and very satisfactorily he administered a rough-and-ready sort of justice. That he was enabled to do so is a legitimate boast of the diggers, for the police at his disposal were corrupt and incapable to a degree of which the magistrate himself bitterly complained. They were the best joke of the diggings.

On October 27th, 1871, Sir H. Barkly published the series of

Digitized by Google

proclamations already referred to. Of them, the one concerning our present subject is No. 71. The text of this is given in the Appendix, but I shall briefly recapitulate its tenor.

Articles 1 to 23 refer to diamond diggings open, or to be opened, upon crown lands in West Griqualand, in which there is always a reservation of the minerals. None of these clauses apply to the four dry diggings, and I shall not dwell on them.

Articles 23 to 29 refer to lands which, though not crown lands, are held upon a tenure reserving the right of minerals. In such cases the proprietor shall be invited to come to terms with Her Majesty's High Commissioner as to the compensation due to him for injury to his farm caused by the diamond digging. If such proprietor shall prefer it, he may treat with the High Commissioner for the sale outright of his lands, the price to be calculated on the basis of an agricultural farm only, and the value of the diamonds shall not be taken in anywise into consideration in estimating the value of the said lands. I am not aware that an acre of West Griqualand comes under this rule.

Article 29 contains the pith of our matter:—

"Whenever diamond diggings shall have been already opened within the said territory, to the extent hereinafter defined upon such lands as hereinafter mentioned, and whenever diamonds shall be discovered within the said territory, upon any lands the property of any private person, the title to which land is not subject to any reservation of precious stones or minerals, and such private person shall desire to establish diamond diggings on such property, and shall have sold, or let, or given license to work mining or digging claims on such property, exceeding in number twenty-four such claims, or to search for diamonds on such property, over a surface, or surfaces, to the extent of twenty thousand square feet in all, or upwards, and claims or licenses in each case to be worked by any number of persons exceeding seventy in all; or wherever in the vicinity of any claims worked on such private property as aforesaid a population shall be settled for the time

Digitized by Google

being of upwards of one hundred persons, the place where such claims or such licenses shall be worked or shall lie to be worked, shall be deemed to be a public diamond field, and may be proclaimed and defined as such in like manner as if the same were on crown land. In every such case the regulations hereinbefore contained relating to the duties of inspector, and the carrying out and enforcing regulations for the order and good government of such fields, shall be deemed to apply in like manner as if the same were situate on crown lands, save that the amount of license money, rent, or royalty to be paid for each claim shall be fixed by the owner of such property as aforesaid whereon such diamond field shall be situate, not being less upon each claim of nine hundred square feet, or in proportion to the superficial extent of the claim, not being less than would be leviable on the same extent if each claim were nine hundred square feet in dimension, than the amount of monthly license duty, royalty, or rent hereinbefore provided in respect of claims upon crown lands,* and the license moneys, royalties, or rents payable by the miners or diggers entitled to work any claim therein shall be accounted for monthly by the Civil Commissioner of the division to the owner of the property whereon such diamond field is situate; and the balance of such license moneys, royalties, or rents, after deducting therefrom the proportion of ten pounds for every hundred pounds thereof, or in the like proportion at the least, and such further sum, if any, as may be necessary to defray the public expenditure in respect of the establishment necessary for the maintenance of order and good government at such diamond field, shall be paid to such owner of such property as aforesaid whereon such diamond field shall be situate; provided also that no rules or regulations passed, or made, or to be passed, or made by any such public meeting of miners as aforesaid shall be valid which shall affect

* Five shillings for a party of three. Ten shillings for four, five, and six hands. Two shillings each for all above this number, whether black or white.

Digitized by Google

the rights of such proprietor, or define the compensation which shall be made to him for interference with any of his rights as such proprietor without his express concurrence in such rules, either in person or through his lawful attorney thereunto authorised.

"God save the Queen!"

The diggings of Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, New Rush, and Old de Beer's, all come under this clause. They are situate on private property, held without reservation of minerals. There are more than twenty-four claims working on them, and more than a hundred persons assembled in the vicinity. Upon the evidence of these facts, the Commissioners made it one of their earliest proceedings to declare the four diggings "open and public." It was, of course, an arbitrary stretch of power on Sir H. Barkly's part, to withdraw from the landowner's control just those strips of his property which were worth confiscating. The Free State had, at least, been logical. It claimed *all* minerals, and declared them open for any one to dig anywhere, ignoring the proprietor. The English proclamation is more specious. It carefully abstains from disputing the landlord's right when such has not been reserved in the original grant. He is allowed the greatest freedom for the future to do what he pleases about mines hereafter to be discovered, which may or may not exist. But, in so far as concerns the actual diggings, or mines, now known and worked, these shall be held public, on the strength of the landowner's "concurrence" in a rush. We have seen how Dutoit "concurred" at Dorstfontein. I have described the manner of Mr. Webb's acquiescence on Bultfontein. But thus did Proclamation No. 71 lay down the law, and sanguine landowners rejoiced nevertheless; for, hard though the case might be, they were not exacting. Only a compromise was asked, and it seemed not unreasonable, that offered in No. 71.

The landowner, however, soon began to find that considerable

Digitized by Google

indirect loss accrued by the removal of the licensing power from his hands to those of the Government. It cannot, I fear, be denied that the officials sent up to West Griqualand were selected with no single eye to efficiency. Several of them were members of the House of Assembly, and all these belonged, curiously enough, to the opposition party, the Anti-responsibles. It is not less worthy of note that a special condition of their appointment was resignation of their seat in parliament. The constituencies, suddenly bereft, all returned Government supporters. An incident so very satisfactory to the governor could not fail to attract notice.

It was early discovered by the landowners that an unaccountable reduction was taking place in the grazing and water licenses. These formerly made up a large proportion of the revenue. There are thousands of sheep and oxen always feeding round the camp, each of which ought to pay for its scanty grass. Sheep cost three pence the half dozen, per month, oxen threepence each. These sums were easily collected as long as the proprietor himself issued digging licenses. When the man came to pay for working diamonds, he was always asked what cattle he owned, nor was it easy to deceive the agent. But, by the new system, there is no hold at all, no opportunity of identifying the fraudulent. Probably not more than half the cattle feeding at Dutoitspan pay for their grass at present. It is much the same with water. The proprietors had sunk many wells, for which they sold the licenses at one shilling a month, which entitled the subscriber to two buckets, filled and carried by himself. The revenue from these has unaccountably fallen off, and so great is the crowd morning and evening it is impossible to supervise at the well-mouth, except in those cases where the magistrate has appointed a receiver. I may mention here that besides the public wells, there are many private enterprises of the sort, which charge subscribers 4*s*. per month, one half of which ought to be paid over at the proprietor's office. Cattle drink at the dams, paying the same license as for

Digitized by Google

grazing. Endless are the rows that take place upon this subject, between dam keepers and fraudulent persons.

Many men holding a digger's license have asserted their right to sink a well upon their claim without any payment to proprietors. Mr. Fry has prosecuted no less than thirteen of these, and obtained a conviction, since my departure. It is plain that a license to dig diamonds does not carry the permission to dig a well. Water is the scarcest and most valuable of all nature's gifts in South Africa.

In a statement of grievances sent by Mr. Webb to Sir H. Barkly last May, I believe that he estimates the loss of the London and South African Exploration Company from water dues alone at £250. The immediate cause of this is the withdrawal of the digging licenses from his office and control.

Whatever were the efficiency of the inspectors, they are overworked; or rather, perhaps, the calls on them are so irregular, they are not able to leave the office for a proper superintendence of the claims. In former times, the proprietors employed Mr. Palgrave, the traveller, at a salary of £300 a year—a very considerable sum indeed this, out yonder—to walk about the diggings and see that each party working had a license. This active life, not without occasional excitement, was very well liked by Mr. Palgrave, and clever indeed must the rogue have been who could cheat him. So important did Mr. Webb hold it that the claims should be jealously watched. But not one effort to check fraudulent digging was made between the English annexation and February 24th of this year; when, on a Saturday afternoon, three parties who had never paid a shilling license were captured within twenty yards of Bultfontein House. All of these had been energetically digging for months in sight of our windows. On Sunday there was a general flitting, there and at Dutoitspan; but, from the tenor of Mr. Webb's petition, referred to above, I gather that no second *razzia* has been attempted. Twice has Mr. Webb engaged a competent person, at his own expense, to

Digitized by Google

fill Mr. Palgrave's former office, and twice have the Commissioners peremptorily refused him leave to demand a show of licenses;—without which authority the poor man would be driven out of the diggings. On what ground they base this refusal has not been stated. Meanwhile, the taking out of a license is not at all compulsory. It is creditable to the digger character that so many fulfil the form.

Nothing appears to be more firmly established by the clause of Proclamation 71 lately cited, than the right of proprietors, therein described, to raise their license fee. This was so fully comprehended by the Commissioners on their first arrival, that they expressed thanks to Mr. Webb for his moderation in abstaining. I transcribe the letter referred to. It is from Captain Rorke, Inspector of Dutoitspan.

"*Inspector's Office, Dutoitspan, 19th November*, 1871.

"SIR,—I have the honour to transmit for your information the following extract from my instructions received from her Majesty's Commissioners:—

"'Mr. Webb, the proprietor, I think, contemplates raising the rate of licenses on his lands. This he has power to do; but as he wisely concurs in the view which I have expressed to him, that a sudden change would be unadvisable as regards existing licenses, I wish it to be understood, as between the owner, the Government, and the diggers, that the acceptance by Mr. Webb of the old rates for a time is not a bar to future increase, if it should be deemed prudent to make one.'

"I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

(Signed) "RICHARD F. RORKE,

"Inspector, Pniel District.

"*H. B. Webb, Esq., Bultfontein.*"

But the views of the Commissioners subsequently changed. As no one during my stay dreamed of such confiscation as is now threatened, the matter did not come to an actual demand on Mr. Webb's part. On the admission of all parties, that gentleman has behaved with the greatest moderation and generosity. He has not exercised the full authority given him; but upon several occasions, in friendly converse with the Commissioners, this matter of raising the license fee was spoken of. They all

Digitized by Google

earnestly declared that such a proceeding could not be sanctioned, whatever were the law. At that time little was said; but I suppose that the recent action of the Commissioners has brought the point to trial. Should any disastrous results ensue, they will be owing, in great part, to the astounding imprudence of Captain Rorke, who in December, 1871, published the following notice:—

"NOTICE.

"Notice is hereby given that the Inspectors and Sub-inspectors have instructions to receive the Government rates for diggers' licenses, and no other or greater rates.

"By order,
(Signed) "R. FORRESTER RORKE,
"Inspector of Claims.

"*Office of Inspector of Claims, Dutoitspan,*
"*26th December*, 1871.

He had already acted upon the letter of this announcement. Confusing the terms of Proclamation 71, the Dutoitspan inspector had issued many licenses for a party of three at 5*s.*, contrary to the clause which declares that private owners, on whose land there is no mineral reservation, shall fix the amount, which the owners of Dutoitspan and Bultfontein had already done—10*s.* per month. Although this notice was promptly rescinded by the Commissioners, it did not fail to produce a stirring effect upon the diggers.

It is enjoined that the inspectors shall make a monthly settlement of their accounts with the Civil Commissioner of their district. He, in his turn, shall hand over to the proprietors what remains of the collection, after 10 per cent., or more, have been subtracted for the necessary expenses. The annexation took place in November. Through December, January, and February the several proprietors impatiently waited for their first report. But it was not until March 5th that Mr. Fry could obtain any statement of accounts, and the actual cash did not reach him till six weeks after. Four months behindhand were the inspectors. One of them, indeed, was dismissed at that date, so unintelligible

Digitized by Google

did his statement appear. Surely, those long-suffering gentlemen, the landowners, have a right to better usage.

When, on March 5th, it was announced to Mr. Fry that a considerable proportion of the collections was so far rectified as to be ready for distribution, but one half was offered to him. This, Mr. Giddy stated, should be considered as an instalment. It was as yet too early to judge what proportion of the revenue would ultimately be demanded for expenses. On such terms Mr. Fry received the half, but *not until the middle of April.* I should much have liked to see my good friend's face when it was notified to him, still a month later, that the Commissioners proposed to pocket the remaining 50 per cent. of the license money for their expenses.

The Free State never threatened more cruel terms. The estimate of charges to fall upon the London and South African Exploration Company (Dutoitspan) and the Hopetown Diamond Company (Bultfontein) is as follows :—

Municipal police and gaols	£2,500
Magistrates' and clerks' salaries	600
Claim Inspectors' department	710
Rent of public offices	540
Total charges for the year . .	£4,350

I have not the pleasure to hold a share in either of these enterprises. Had I the smallest interest in them, knowing what I know, this calm proposal would certainly irritate me to strong language. It will be observed that the entire expenses of governing the camps, and not the camps only, but one-third at least of all West Griqualand, is thrown upon the purchasers of Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, and Vooruitzicht (New Rush and Old de Beers). For the latter Company is, I presume, assessed at a still higher rate than the two former.

Let us take two arguments to see how this rule works :—The new annexation is divided into three districts, or magistracies,

Digitized by Google

Pniel, with which we are concerned, Klipdrift, and Griquatown. In both of these latter there are diggings, with the necessary inspectors, police, and so on. I wonder what percentage these small river washings would have to pay under the system which mulcts the dry diggings one half. Were the entire sum of license money confiscated, it could not be sufficient to pay expenses. The deficit, I must suppose, is paid from the general revenue. By the dry digging precedent absolutely nothing is left to the landowner. He was just 40 per cent. better off under the Free State. Does not this show how absurdly unjust is the new rule?

Let us take another argument. If it be the landowner's charge to pay the expense of keeping order on the fields, it will be equally his just charge to pay for the restoration of order when disturbed. Let us suppose that the New Rush riots, hereafter to be detailed, had reached so dangerous a head that troops must be sent from Capetown. Rumour says that this measure was seriously contemplated at the first news. The cost of forwarding six hundred men and two pieces of artillery would not be less than £100,000, perhaps much more. Shall the proprietors pay that also? They would rather leave their ungrateful farms to become a howling waste. In discourse with Sir H. Barkly this *reductio ad absurdum* appeared to strike him; but when, encouraged by the small success, I used it to Lord Kimberley, that gentleman replied with emphasis, "The country should pay every farthing we could squeeze of it." I replied that it was not the question whether the *country* of Griqualand West should pay, but whether *three little farms*, one two hundred thousandth part of its area, should pay. In point of fact, all the landowners could think of asking is, that the cost of preserving order shall fall upon the territory, not on their two dozen acres of diamond property. Lord Kimberley's answer to me admitted the very question at issue.

But it is an avowed principle of the Cape Assembly that if "a company be rich enough," that is sufficient reason for taxing it as

Digitized by Google

ar as it will bear. I refer the curious reader to a debate upon a certain petition addressed to the Assembly by the representatives of the Cape Copper Mining Company, May 7th of this year. It appears that the policy of Government towards that association is exactly similar to its conduct in West Griqualand. It charges to the Cape Copper Company all the police, gaols, salaries, rents, and other costs of government in their mining settlements of Namaqualand. These things the Company has borne. But it is now proposed, executed long before this, that a customs station shall be made at Port Nolloth, where the ore is shipped, and a proper officer appointed. The petition simply prayed that the expense of building the custom-house, the residence for this man, and his salary, should not fall on the shoulders of the Company. In vain; the wretched shareholders, who, be it remembered, are about to pay the dues this officer will collect, have every jot of the burden thrust upon them, as the schoolboy once had to pay a shilling for the rod used to flog him. In the debate, fully reported by the *Cape Argus*, under date of May 16th, there is only one argument used—the Company is rich enough, and it must be made to pay. Not an attempt to justify the tax.

Similar is the case of West Griqualand, only differing in one point. The Cape Copper Company has actually invited, and does employ, the throng of persons who require a large police establishment; whilst the landowners of whom I speak neither invited nor want the men who "rushed" their ground. Government now invites them, and yet would tax the suffering proprietor to keep the swarm in order. Every reader will understand that landowners wish to work their own soil, to get the diamonds themselves. This they cannot do, or could not until quite recently. I know two brothers who took £40,000 between them from New Rush. For this sum they paid the proprietors ten months' license, amounting to £8! Is it not probable that Mr. Perkins, the manager, would have preferred the diamonds these gentlemen carried away?

Digitized by Google

It is quite evident that if any such charge as 50 per cent. is to be made at the present rate of license, that rate must be increased immediately. Before this time it is likely that such a step has been taken by Mr. Webb. Serious results may follow; but, if they should do so, the Government will have but itself to blame. There was a great unwillingness in Mr. Webb's mind, as I can testify, to raise the fee. If he has done so, it is but in self-defence against an outrageous exaction. I should add, that the general revenue of West Griqualand, besides that accruing from diamond farms, was estimated to me by the Colonial Secretary at £20,000 per annum. From this source, or from an equitable system of rating, the expenses of Government should be discharged. The diggers pay not a single tax, not a single rate. They pay not even rent for the land they live on, and ruin with sorting. Every expense, every tax, is charged, systematically, upon the land-owner.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

DUTOITSPAN.

Back from Pniel to the Dry Diggings—The road—The pebbles—Job's Canteen—The Halfway House Canteen—The flies—Busy road—First glimpse of New Rush—The roads, the tents, the sortings, the claims, the canteens, the market square, the mess—Old de Beers—A hedge of carcases—Dutoitspan—Benning and Martin's—Order and routine in that hostelry—Luncheon—Prices.

Monday, November 20, 1871.

THIS morning we left Pniel on the "back track." Dutoitspan, New Rush, and the other dry diggings—which are at this time the real diamond fields—lie twenty-four miles to the southward. By so much had we been carried beyond our goal. Two public carts per diem ply between Dutoitspan and the river. They take five hours, or about that space, to do the distance, and charge 15*s.* for a seat, with no particular regulations touching baggage, or, for that matter, aught else. A most dreary vehicle was that in which I took my place. Paintless, coated with mud, ripped and split and bound up with thongs. Its springs enswathed in hide. Its rusty tilt in ribbands. With harness of rope and leather and raw skin, all intermixed, knotted together. The four plump mules inspanned looked round at it and us with plain contempt. I clambered to a broken seat—crack went whip and harness at the same time. Descended the driver swearing. Jardine looked on with smiles. String was produced, yards of it, and a thong called *reim*—spelling not guaranteed. With cunning twists and doubles the reel of cord gradually wound itself away. Swearing, the driver climbed in

Digitized by Google

again. We went on our way, pursued by the landlord's thoughtful smile. What could he mean by that amiable contortion?

The road from Pniel to Dutoitspan was, at that time, the most stupendous and awful of Nature's works. In many lands have I marvelled to remark by what simple means she can produce the most astonishing effects. More than had been usual was I impressed with the idea that morning. I should take it that Nature intended to startle up the traveller's mind, that he might come upon the marvels beyond with an eye raging in excitement; a mind and body stimulated to the verge of phrensy. How does she effect this? With mighty views far-stretching, with Alps up-piled, roaring cascades? Not at all. Doth she conduct the visitor through gloomy clefts, thrilling him in horrid gloom, causing his hair to rise in deadly fear? Not so. Perhaps (you think) volcanic fires burst forth beneath his feet, sulphurous fumes ascend, the living air burns ghastly green. It is not thus. So do poor human beings conceive the means of stirring terror and alarm. The grand effects of nature are of purer birth; simpler that machinery which has so direful power. Stunned, bewildered, parched, the traveller arrives at his destination, but by no gross and brutal means is he thus reduced. I will tell you with what tools our great mother works to win her object, and in the hearing breathe you a humble sigh for your own poverty of imagination. The agent she employs is—pebbles!—just that, no more. How beautiful, how suggestive is this fact! Pebbles! They are found everywhere, and no one ever yet shuddered at sight of them—unless in the hand of some ruddy youth, whose name may be what you will, but whose heart and craft are those of David. But oh, oh, oh! ye who have despised the lowly pebble, go ye to the Dutoitspan road, and see, and feel, and tremble, and believe. What might of pain and terror lies in the smooth, round product of the brook! I do protest those stones seem gifted with prehensile power. It is not only that one runneth over them, and grindeth past them, and plungeth madly

Digitized by Google

in the holes that they have left. They do indeed appear to grasp the quivering wheel with granite hands, and shake and toss it. Actually, in all the seriousness that memory of bruise can give, I do allege these *klips* to be a thing for downright dread. We have no notion of such travelling in England nor in America. I have used a "corduroy road," and that is bad enough; but it lacks the peculiar agony of unseen hands, which struggle to rend you piecemeal. Easily enough can one account for "things," and there are those to whom a mere explanation of this sort is equivalent to half a remedy:—Of course, the wheel gets in between two pebbles bedded in the earth, lying at an angle towards each other, the mules drag it out, and in dragging wrench it this way and that. Such an accident ought to occur, in a less degree, on very, very rough roads of England. It never does, because no English vehicle would stand the strain, and no English driver would be mad enough to test it. At the Cape, as I have told you, men know the quality of their metal, and count to a feather weight what it will bear. The one extravagance of your boer is his cart —the one honest article of Cape trade is this; other imports may be cheap, nasty, and unsound to any extent, the cart *must* be perfection. If it be not, the swindle is discovered, of necessity, within very few hours, and is never forgiven. The boer will risk his health with poisonous groceries, stores, and liquors, he will wear with equanimity shirts that rip and come to pieces; but he will not risk his neck. On that line he puts his foot, and so the pebbles of the Dutoitspan road are possible, because Cape carts are marvels of honest work, and will bear to plunge amongst them.

The agonies this torment can produce cease towards the middle of your journey. Immediately round Pniel the ground is of a dense red sand, very deep, and most trying to the cattle. It bears a scanty growth of acacia, mere bush, but rich in thorns. Cape cotton flourishes here and there; bulbous plants are frequent, but none of them yet in flower. After mounting the

Digitized by Google

slope, traversing the table-land, and risking one's neck in the further descent, the red sand vanishes, and the eternal plains ensue. Across them cuts a very broad track, mud coloured, broken with wheel marks—the road to the fields! About a mile beyond Pniel, in a hollow, stands the famed canteen belonging to "Job." It is a tent most roughly shaped. Job made it himself, I believe, and he is not equal to the other patriarch, apparently, in tent-making. The pole and wood-work are mere branches of a tree; the furniture is a plank, resting on two barrels; barrels and roots are set around for seats. In a simplicity that does credit to his heart, Job exposes his sleeping accommodation to public criticism in the shape of half-a-dozen sacks and an old kaross of sheep-skin. This exhibition is evidently looked upon as a hospitable intent on the landlord's part, for one of his guests is always taking his ease upon the inn bed. What further justification there may be for that placard outside, bearing "Hotel" in such strong, but rudimentary, characters, is not visible. We alighted, of course; it is *de règle.* Three or four carts stood by the door, and a saddle horse or two. Job was full of work, stripped to his jersey. At the bar stood a fat man drinking loudly. "Sir," said he to me, "I come from the toy-shop of the world, damme!" I expressed surprise. "Ah, you may well say that! Here I am, and I come," &c. This he repeated till my driver had settled that little question of fishing-lines with which he had justified to himself the call. The fat man got no further. What he meant I leave to your ingenuity in guessing.

We drove away along the mud-coloured road, crossing several sloots, or rain channels, of unusual depth, but so worn down by traffic as to be not a bit dangerous. The road was lined with bones and half-dry carcases. Here is the animal world's Gehenna. Always take for granted in the scenery of the diamond fields a hedge of bones, and horns, and rotting bodies, along each side the path. Next call was at the Halfway-House Canteen. This is a canvas

Digitized by Google

dwelling also, but of handsome proportions. The active landlady was very full of indignation against a rival, who had bought the "pitch" over her husband's head, and given him notice to quit. Whilst regaling us with sardines and sauce of house-flies, she dilated on that most ridiculous of rights called the "squatter's," to my great amusement; it was some weeks before the ravings of such-like advocates ceased to divert an unprejudiced observer, but every joke grows wearisome with too much iteration. However, I was pleased to find one person enthusiastic on the subject of the annexation. By the earnest deliberations, anxious councils, and strenuous final action of Foreign Secretaries, high commissioners, governors, and lawyers, worthy Mrs. Cogan secured another month for removing. The process of ejectment had to be gone through again in an English court not yet opened.

Here I must speak of the flies, for at this moment they began to put us in terror of our lives. The canvas walls were black beneath their hosts. Dishes and drink choked with them. They actually bit our flesh and drained our mortal juices. If we retaliated, it was an involuntary act. I say this, because perhaps a society may be instituted for exacting justice for the "poor martyred flies." The horror of illness was more than doubled by this plague. We, hale men, grew sick with the tease and nausea of them. What must poor sick fellows have suffered?

The nearer we drew to our journey's end, the more busy became the road. Carts passed every five minutes, many of them handsome vehicles, and handsomely horsed. Empty waggons lumbered by, on the homeward journey. There was no chaff. Passers by paid no more attention to each other than in London streets. Yet many of them were colonial born, arrived within very few weeks from some distant farm, where a strange face is the rarest of all chances. So quick is a man's education to self-dependence in a prosperous and democratic community.

On a sudden the driver pointed with his whip—"New Rush!" he said calmly, and flecked the wheeler's neck. We looked out

Digitized by Google

in great excitement. Far off, on a low swell that reached our horizon, appeared a broken crest, faintly white against the sky. No towers or pinnacles, such as one dreams of in a fairy city. Only a white sheen of tents along the ridge. A few yards more the sight was lost, behind a dip in the plain apparently so level. Another rise, and it was seen again, defined more clearly. So on, lost and regained alternately, with every glimpse more dingy and more broken, until the pale grey mounds of "sorted stuff" came into view. Then lonely little camps occurred, consisting perhaps of a family waggon with two or three gipsy tents around, and little heaps of whitey soil; the whole encircled with a six inch ditch, and a fence, may be, of thorns. These are mostly occupied by boers, who carry their stuff home for wives and children to "sort." Further on are more pretentious dwellings, houses of canvas stretched on wooden frame work, with neat windows cut in them, bound with coloured braid or ribbands round the edge. Many of them stand upon a pavement of nodules thrown from the sieve, about the size of marbles or under; it is not very rare to pick up a diamond under one's feet on these platforms. The mounds of "sortings" are now close by, thronged with busy men, black and white. Our road, however, is still the veldt. Wherever no tent stands, nor hole is dug, nor heap of sand conceals the soil, the thin dry grass appears, with trefoil leaves of cassia, and vetch-like golden flowers. It is thus even in the busiest street, where houses are of wood or metal. One never can forget that all this great town has no longer history than of three months, nor expects to exist for twelve months more. Ruins it has in plenty, however; poor old broken tents, rusted and rotted sieves, holes abandoned. At every step one kicks aside the bones of oxen. Vile smells assail the nose. An utter recklessness of decency is one of those camp features which most speedily impress the visitor.

Through the straggling purlieus of the place we trot with crack of whip and warning shout. The roadway swarms with naked

Digitized by Google

Kaffir and brawny white man. Dressed in corduroy or shoddy, high-booted, bare as to arms and breast, with beard of any length upon their chins, girt with a butcher's knife on belt of leather—one could not readily believe that amongst these bronzed fellows might be found creditable representatives of every profession. The roadway grows snowy white. Our wheels sink in "diamondiferous sand," brought from a depth of fifty feet. Piled up on either hand, it narrows the road to the last inch. We seem to be in a "cutting," ten feet deep. Above us on each side, the sieves are endlessly at work, throwing a cloud of poisonous dust upon the wind. Screened from the merciless sun by an old umbrella, sits the master of the claim, "sorting." His arm goes regularly to and fro. Our view is bounded by the close horizon of these artificial hills, save, here and there, the mound falls back to give a "canteen" place for plying trade. The work of diamond digging is all going on within ten yards of us. The "claims," the pits whence comes the "stuff," lie on the right, shielded by the barrier of their own produce. The treasure-bearing sand is borne past us each moment, in screaming bullock dray, and mule cart, and sack and bucket of the Kaffir. It goes to those solitary tents outside. The vehicles are pushed half up the hill to let us by. We approach the business quarter. Banks lower. The excavated road becomes a street. Wooden houses show themselves, all hung about with miscellaneous goods. Broadcloth and snowy *puggaries* are seen. Thicker and thicker stand the tents, closer presses the throng. A din of shouts and laughter fills the air. We pass large drinking shops full of people; negroes go by in merry gangs. One stares amazed at such a crush of dwellings, such a busy, noisy host. One more sharp turn, and the market square opens before us, with Main Street on the right.

An anti-climax ridiculous. Brimful with astonishment, one reaches this point of view, and all the wonder disappears. It was the confusion, the "jam," of dwellings that so amazed us newcomers. Market square and Main Street are as regular as mathe-

Digitized by Google

matics can make them. The former is an immense expanse, set round with buildings, wooden, metal, and canvas. Great gaps intervene amongst them, for the instinct of trade does not approve the situation chosen for its centre. Main Street is the favourite site. Here are great warehouses one story high, pretty frame tents of "diamond koopers," neat canteens, and luncheon bars. There are glass windows in abundance set in the walls of plank and iron; well-dressed people form one half the crowd; the street is thronged with passenger carts, many of them really handsome vehicles, with fine horses. Perhaps all this fixed order and arrangement is more justly marvellous than the pell-mell outside; but it does not so much impress the visitor. The oldest of these big stores has not three months' existence yet, but the blistering sun and grinding dust of Africa have given them an ancient rusty look. There is little of the "camp" visible as one glances up and down the street; but behind, within arms' length of their neat back windows, the jumble of tent, and hole, and Kaffir shed, and cart, and tethered horse, and rubbish heap, spreads out again. At the upper end those white mounds bar the view, with the busy, seething population upon them and behind.

Dropping half our passengers, we drove on through such another chaos as that already traversed, and through the veldt again, with not a sign of diamond digging before us. On the left lies Old de Beers, some three hundred yards away, bounded by a real mountain chain of "siftings." Very few bushes are visible; but carcasses and skeletons of oxen line the path. Mostly they lie just in the shape they fell in, with limbs outtossed, and head extended. Some have been picked clean by dog and bird, but their bones still hang together; others have dried up as they lay, no one having taken the trouble to skin them; the bones of some are scattered in queer dissection, head and fore-quarters here, hind legs and spine two yards away. Our noses give proof that the waste of animal life has not yet ceased, nor are the scavengers active.

Digitized by Google

A mile and a half beyond New Rush the driver raised his whip again, and signalled out "Dutoitspan," another city of canvas, lying low, and on that account all visible at once. To the right he pointed out Bultfontein, on a swell that dipped over. The approaches of Dutoitspan are more orderly than those of New Rush. There is, indeed, in all that camp something of staid and decent which befits the elder sister, though elder she be but by six months. The diggings do not intrude upon the town; the streets, and not the main street only, are broader, and more regular. Much of this difference is owing, no doubt, to the excellent plan on which Mr. Webb laid out the township, and much also to the wider space at the squatter's disposal. New Rush is desperately cramped. The proprietors of that digging made efforts to lay out a township called Gladstone, at a reasonable distance from the claims, but tradesmen would not set up their tabernacle there; they all crowded to one spot. The lay of the ground at Dutoitspan allowed them to follow their inclination to a great extent with impunity, and Mr. Webb's firmness and judgment effected the rest. But it is also to be noticed that the appearance and manners of our comrades at the "Pan" differ from those prevalent at New Rush. Our Dutoitspan digger is comparatively quiet and reserved; neither fashion nor inclination, as a rule, necessitates champagne for his morning beverage. He does not *often* fight, blusters scarcely at all, and pursues the snug little game in hand with an abiding recollection that the first object of a digger should be to make a fortune, not to spend one. Perhaps it will scarcely be needful to say after this that signs of poverty are more frequent here than at the other digging, and that a smaller per centage of the people are gentlemen by birth and education.

As at New Rush, the extreme outskirts of the town are occupied with waggons and solitary tents. These become thicker set and larger. A flag-pole, with the representation of a black horse, dominates them. Right in front are the hills

Digitized by Google

of siftings, higher than those we had seen, and more fully occupied with sorters. Turning sharp round to the right by these, one crosses a deep-worn sloot and enters the upper street. It is of excellent width, bordered by neat wooden stores and "frame houses." Bultfontein opens out upon the right, a honeycomb of holes, a labyrinth of mounds, rising to some elevation over a valley dense with tents. On the left, above a slender edging of shops, hangs the cliff of sorted sand. Further on, the diamond-bearing stratum falls back. Passing several wide roads, lined only with tents at present, but busy with plank and tool, we reach the market square. This is a space handsome without extravagance, surrounded with stores. I think there are but two canvas houses in the square, and one of these, oddly enough, belongs to Mr. Webb, the representative of the proprietors. All the rest are plank, and not a vacant corner could be had under a price of £20 the foot. Few of the traders there will sell at twice the price. The Briton will say it is no great boast for a capital, that its main streets should be lined with timber houses; but I have written former pages vainly, if the reader will not understand that a timber house is just the most expensive thing in all the country. Speedy warehousing for their goods, a start before the rivals, and a roof to shelter customers, were the objects these *fore-treking* tradesmen had in view. They could not wait, they cannot wait now, for bricks to be made, house built and seasoned. At any cost they got up timber dwellings from the Eastern Province, and never since have they found time to plan a house of brick.

The cart conveyed us along the main street just past the square, and set us down at a hostelry far-famed wherever news of our great treasure fields has spread. At Benning and Martin's we descended. This is an edifice with lofty gable end of wood fronting the street. We entered a spacious room, in which were active preparations visible for fixing a billiard table. Passing through, one perceived the meaner finishing concealed with such

Digitized by Google

magnificence in front. A really handsome apartment, so far as dimensions go, is the dining-room of Benning and Martin's. Forty feet long I should take it to be, and thirty wide. The roof, of corrugated iron, hangs quite five-and-twenty feet over one's head. But the partitions, alas! are of green baize, no statelier material. Three frame doors, woefully tattered, give entrance to the bedrooms on either side. Down the middle is a long rough table, which never knew the decency of a cloth; forms border it all down its length. Here, at breakfast, dinner, and tea assemble the *jeunesse dorée* of Dutoitspan, a motley but good-humoured concourse. A *nichée* of duchesses could never show such gems as the guests of this table always carry in their pockets. Down each side of the broad room are placed iron bedsteads, rarely untenanted by day, and sometimes doubly filled at night; but the private rooms lie beyond the green-baize walls. They are just big enough to hold two beds, with space to turn between. Washhand-stand or glass or luxuries of any kind we do not boast. Washing must be done *coram publico*, in the open camp behind. Other operations of the toilet you may manage with heaven's assistance, for there is no help in man at Benning and Martin's.

It was the luncheon hour, and from every corner of the camp men hurried up. Feeling as nearly lonesome as an old traveller can, I stood by the outer door and watched the crowd. Up the broad street was a range of stores, larger than those at New Rush. Out in the roadway their goods were piled, in a manner that told well for the public honesty. It would be waste of time to catalogue the articles exposed. Suffice it, there are but two shopkeepers in all the town who even affect a speciality: these are a watchmaker and a bookseller, or rather library keeper. But the watchmaker is one of our preachers and also deals in cutlery, while the librarian sells all things beneath the sun, including fruit and eggs. The larger tradesmen possess the utmost universality of stocks, and some of them defy the customer to pose them, so far as necessaries

Digitized by Google

of dress, food, drink, and shelter go. At this end of the town your view is bounded by a tumultuous crowd of tents, and the little mountain range of sortings over all. In the other direction are more large warehouses, and the street ends abruptly in the open veldt, for the tent-dwelling population clings close to the digging from which the roadway trends further and further on this side. A blazing sun poured its whitest and strongest light upon the scene. The footsteps of the ceaseless crowd, the trampling of horses and the whirl of wheels, threw up the sand in clouds of finest dust; a noise of eager voices and loud laughter filled one's ears; and over all the shrill Kaffir shouts predominated.

Thicker and thicker pressed the hungry diggers past me. Not all in search of luncheon, for some came to drink, some to keep appointments, and some to show a friend their "luck." Suddenly in the crowd I saw H. H. How many hundreds of good fellows about the globe will recognise those initials, though I tell them that the gentleman had discarded yachting button and sealskin coat alike, and wore never a diamond in ring or collar stud. His good red face was browner, and his hair had grown more prematurely grey. But the old happy laugh was in his eyes, and his voice had still the quick and eager ring. Picturesquely dressed, of course, he was, in a suit of grey, belted round the waist, and a snow-white ostrich feather falling down his neck. I seized him by the shoulder, he turned and stood agape. Five minutes after we had drank the wassail cup, and I was presented to more good fellows than my eye could recognise in after time, or my memory could bear the names of.

At luncheon Benning and Martin's dining-table is more amusing to view than at any other meal. The diggers come there straight from their work, never pausing to wash. Some have been actually engaged in the claim, and make their appearance with sleeves rolled up and hands begrimed. Others are from the sorting-table, and show themselves with faces white and bloodshot eyes. Nearly all the "working" men are badly scarred on hands and arms.

Digitized by Google

The slightest scratch will fester when the poisonous limey sand gets into it. There is no order or precedence, but great good-nature rules. I never saw a quarrel, though such matters happen sometimes, of course. Those whose notions of a "digging" are taken only from sketches of Australia and California, would be much astonished could they get a momentary view of our table. You will hear as good English there for the most part as anywhere in the world, and delivered with the true gentlemanly accent. Noise enough and to spare there is, but of that pleasant sort which youth, and the consciousness of success well-earned, will amply excuse. Boers do not come here, and the poorer sort take luncheon at their tents or in the claim. Diamond digging is emphatically, up to this time, a "gentleman's digging." Long may it continue so.

The tariff of Benning and Martin's for board and lodging is 12*s.* 6*d.* a day. Few residents sleep there, however, and the charge for meals is 2*s.* 6*d.* each. "Drinks" are 6*d.*, except French brandy, which costs 3*d.* more. Boer or native brandy is only 3*d.* Soda-water is made and largely consumed; it costs 9*d.* A very favourite drink is gingerbeer, which is mixed with every liquor. The native wine, called pontac, of a red grape, made both sweet and dry, is much used; it costs from 1*s.* to 2*s.* a bottle. The other Cape wines are about the same price; they seem to be wholesome enough, but unpalatable to a refined taste. Experience, however, has convinced most working diggers that all spirituous drinks whatever are injurious, and an unusual proportion of them are teetotallers. Beer fetches 2*s.* 6*d.* a bottle, and returns very small profit to the seller at that—or so, at least, I was solemnly assured by many parties, and I am inclined to believe it. The price of articles as sold upon the market square of Dutoitspan at this time I detail elsewhere.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

BULTFONTEIN AND ALEXANDERSFONTEIN.

A drive through Bultfontein—The purlieus of a camp—The poor man's digging—A labyrinth of holes—Careless act of the inspectors—Alexandersfontein diggings thrown into Bultfontein—Alexandersfontein—The house—Abundance of water on this property—Reputed diamond kopjes on Alexandersfontein—Adventure of the bed, the baby, and the baize partition.

November 20, 1871.

WHEN lunch was over I hired a cart for half-a-guinea, to visit the neighbouring farms of Bultfontein and Alexandersfontein. Driving through the market square, I had further occasion to admire the judgment which was shown in planning this settlement of Dutoitspan. Across the bottom of the square runs a street parallel to the main street above, not less broad, and containing many creditable stores. At right angles to this, again, the openings of future streets appear, the which, though empty now, are preserved for occupation. Through the portals of one of these we drove from the town. The valley that lies between Dutoitspan and Bultfontein presented the appearance usual on the outskirts of a camp. Tents, of the class "loose and disorderly" in general, were scattered over the slopes. Ox waggons, used as houses, stood about. Here was a canteen of the lowest sort, and there the fluttering ensign of a washerwoman. At some distance on our left, the pan, which gives its name to all this famous spot, was seen, in shape of a tiny puddle. Bultfontein dam we passed in going, a considerable pool, strongly buttressed on the hither side. Beneath the dam wall squatted a dozen or

Digitized by Google

two of Hottentot women, screaming, laughing, singing, and beating time in all their exercises, with the shirts of some poor Christian banged against a stone. Grotesquely indecent were these persons. Turning round by the dam, between a solitary grog shop and a brick-house unfinished, of no small pretension, we entered the public digging of Bultfontein, which lies, indeed, a bare three hundred yards from that of Dutoitspan.

I think I described this kopje in my last chapter as a honeycomb of holes, a labyrinth of hillocks. It is so, indeed. At Dutoitspan and New Rush you have some small sense of security in keeping along the main roads. At Bultfontein nothing of the sort; it is a country of ambuscades and pitfalls. One road there is right across the kopje, and another which parts at right angles from "the House" towards Dutoitspan; but both of these are perilous travelling. There seems to have been no manner of order or scheme in digging here. Bultfontein, as its name denotes, is a hill somewhat steeper than the common. On the very crown stands the old farm-house, now greatly enlarged and beautified. All the hillside is cut up, hollowed out, piled over, ploughed, in fact, and harrowed, as by some monstrous engine undirected. Here and there — I speak now of the state of things visible, November 20, 1871—at long intervals, a party of men, black for the most part, might be seen at work. Some few holes had been worked to a depth of 15 feet or so. But nine-tenths of the whole area was just a troubled sea of sand, shallow trenches, heaped banks, rough buttresses of stone, and deep pitfalls. There were comparatively few claims working on the kopje at this time. The wonderful treasures of New Rush had drawn great part of the population thither. Bultfontein, also, had a larger proportion of poor men on it than the other farms. It is emphatically called "the poor man's digging." The finds, in favourable spots, are very numerous, though stones run small. Claims fetch no large sums. Kaffirs will work here at a lower wage than in the deep and dangerous cuttings elsewhere. For these reasons Bultfontein

Digitized by Google

digging has been a favourite with those colonial people of the poorer class who have migrated to the fields. At very small cost they can here obtain an excellent chance of making money, though it be comparatively but a trifle.

Passing the farm-house, I followed a road which led right across the kopje. This road is the boundary line between Bultfontein and Alexandersfontein farms. The Commissioners, by inadvertence probably, have included the diggings belonging to the latter estate in those of the former, not being aware that they had different owners—a mistake, I should think, which will cause some little confusion when the license money comes to be divided between the London and South African Exploration Company and the Hopetown Diamond Company. At this time, however, the amount to be collected from both was scarcely worth notice. Perhaps one-fifth of the Bultfontein public field belongs to Alexandersfontein; but there were not more than sixty parties at work on the whole kopje. After a steep descent between headlong precipices — utterly unfenced—we drove into the veldt. The country is as flat as your hand, with only ant-heaps for mountains, and rain-sloots for rivers. Finding there were no other diggings to be seen, I looked round Alexandersfontein farm and returned. There is a very unusual promise of water on this property; two springs are already opened on it, and a large garden laid out. Beyond a doubt, this will be a valuable piece of land when a large population is permanently established on the fields. At present the diggers are fed from a basis hundreds of miles away. The Free State sends its sheep, and the Transvaal its vegetables. Alexandersfontein could grow anything, were its watercourses opened. This operation is now rapidly proceeding. Before I left, vegetables from hence were in the market. The house is very unusually large, and has been carefully put in order by the proprietors. A rent of £300 a-year, without the use of garden or farm, is demanded and will probably be obtained for it.

As regards the chances of another digging on this property, I

Digitized by Google

should be very unwilling to give an opinion. The driver of my cart, a serious but nearly unintelligible boer, told me he knew a spot where diamonds lay on the surface. Others have told me the same, but the majority of the diggers will not believe it. I speak on this subject in the following chapter.

Returning to Dutoitspan I dined with H. H., at the common table in Benning and Martin's. My *convive* on either hand was, one, an ex-Captain of Dragoons; the other, son of one of our richest English diamond merchants. Our host was supported by a former subaltern of the 16th Lancers, and a late officer of the Irish constabulary. A very pleasant meal it was, *malgré tout;* but I soon went to my baize-walled chamber. In the night, a soft round substance, wriggling in the pit of my stomach, on the exterior, awoke me. Seized with alarm and astonishment, I grasped the object rudely. A plaintive squall dispelled my violence. Maternal anxiety responded in a drowsy question. Lo! it was my landlord's youngest son, who, slipping from the domestic couch, had worked his way to my adjacent berth, forcing a passage through the green-baize wall with a part of his person never yet used by human creature for the purpose of boring. I followed the directions called to me from the other side, and pushed him back on the maternal bed, in the opposite direction, head foremost.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

THE MANNER OF DIGGING FOR DIAMONDS, WITH NOTES ON THE PECULIARITIES OF THE GEMS FOUND AT NEW RUSH, DUTOITSPAN, AND BULTFONTEIN, RESPECTIVELY.

Size and situation of the four dry diggings—Proportion of diamondiferous ground to the farms—Opening a new "rush"—Character of soils—Manner of working—The riddling—The sorting—Chances of loss—Incredible recklessness of diggers—Accidental discoveries—Cost of tools—Sanitary effects on the digger—Other minerals and substances found in digging—Mr. Dunn's analysis of the siftings—Cape carbonate—Peculiarities of each digging—Depth of claims—The roads of New Rush—Great want of them at Dutoitspan and elsewhere—How it happened—The principle of diamond mining discovered step by step—The deadlock at Dutoitspan—Outside diggers begin to refuse right of way.

THERE are accounted four "dry diggings":—New Rush, called also the "Colesberg Kopje" and "New de Beers," Old de Beers, Dutoitspan, and Bultfontein. These all lie within a circuit of three miles. The two former, New Rush and Old de Beers, stand upon the same farm of Vooruitzicht, meaning Look Forward. The diggings here occupy, between them, a space of 20 to 25 acres. As I have said, no survey of the "public fields" has yet been made, nor beacons put up to define the area which Government claims to be "open." In a letter published by the *Times* since my return, New Rush is estimated at 16 acres in extent. I should not have thought it more than half this size. Most certainly the current opinion of the fields put it at 10 acres. But I think it probable the two kopjes of Vooruitzicht may measure 22 or 23 acres between them; perhaps a little more.

Digitized by Google

Of this area, however, not a little is but barely productive. People who have paid hundreds of pounds for a quarter claim on the outside roads of marvellous New Rush, would have done better to "jump" a piece at Bultfontein. Those parts of the Kopje from which have been dug out the wealth that passes for a proverb, covers scarcely the space of Belgrave Square. But, taking the extremest measurement that could be admitted, granting the two Vooruitzicht diggings to be 32 acres in area, I wish to point out before going further what proportion the "diamondiferous" ground bears to the farm of which it forms a part.

Vooruitzicht, the farm, contains 17,000 acres, of which 32, at the utmost, yield diamonds.

Dutoitspan, the farm, contains 6,500 acres, of which 15, perhaps, yield diamonds.

Bultfontein, the farm, contains about 9,000 acres, 8 of them diamondiferous, inclusive of 1½ to 2 acres belonging to Alexandersfontein, which farm has an area of 13,000 acres.

I have already stated that a circle of three miles diameter would include them all, though from the extreme boundary of Alexandersfontein to the utmost limit of Vooruitzicht would be at least fifteen miles, and as much in the other diameter from the southern border of Dutoitspan. It is thus seen, at a glance, what a tiny morsel of each property has yet been proved to be worth digging.

But let us carry the calculation a step further. The area of Griqualand West, where alone may diamonds be said to be worked *at present*, is at least 20,000 square miles, perhaps double this figure—say 20,000. So many miles contain 12,800,000 acres, if I remember rightly my tables. The diamondiferous farms appear therefore to be rather less than one two-hundred-and-eightieth of the whole area. But the actual diggings—that is, the spots where diamonds are known to lie in quantities that pay for working, are little more than a thousandth part of the farms. On which figures it is clear that, so far as is yet known, but one two-hundred-

Digitized by Google

and-eighty-thousandth of Griqualand West can truly be called diamondiferous. A startling calculation for those who speak of all the up country as a mine of gems.*

No controversy is carried on more hotly at the fields than that suggested by these figures. What probability exists of another discovery? I am not concerned with the question directly at this moment. It is sufficient to observe that all the researches of science, and all the teachings of experience, have as yet failed to establish, or even to suggest, any geological theory to guide the "prospector." After four years of successful digging, we are still without other means than the witness of our brute senses to predicate the existence of diamonds in any spot. The actual sight of gems lying on the surface, or in earth turned over, is the sole "theory" minded by an experienced searcher. Thus was Dutoitspan discovered, the earliest dry digging; and thus the others.

Satisfied by this ocular demonstration, or relying on reports which he believes trustworthy, the digger proceeds to work in monstrous haste. Rushing to the spot of which the news has reached him, he measures out a space which he conceives to be about 30 feet square, digs a shallow trench round it, and fortifies the work with a stone here and there. This done he withdraws to the ambulating canteen which has followed the earliest to the spot, and cools his brow and whets his hopes in pontac and gingerbeer, "pickaxe," or some such compound. Thence returning to his claim, if an energetic fellow, he sets to work off-hand, digging and picking, whilst a mate puts up the sorting-table in a convenient spot. The third of the party—for diggers should go in triplets—or a black fellow in his service, riddles the stuff thrown out. So they work steadily on till the authorities—an elected committee in former times, the

* I leave out the river diggings, since it appears certain that the diamonds found there have been merely carried to the spot. Counting them all, however, the above figures would scarcely be reduced perceptibly.

Digitized by Google

nearest inspector now—comes to survey the kopje, and receive applications for claims. When the lines are rectified by this official, and his full 30 feet square allotted to every one, it generally happens that a digger finds himself some yards away from the spot where he has begun to dig, perhaps to "find;" sometimes his boundaries will be moved to an immense distance, and numbers of those who have arrived late will be pushed off the hillock altogether. Have I mentioned before that diamonds are found upon a ridge? The remark belongs to a later chapter, but it merits noting at this spot.

The method of working is the same identically at all the four dry diggings. Diamonds are found there in two qualities of soil: first, in the surface sand; and second, in a whitey-grey, nodulous, limey earth, which Mr. Dunn describes as "tufaceous limestone." This is found in layers, at different depths. Between them are strata comparatively unproductive, but the prudent digger passes nothing by unsorted. Gems are discovered in the most unlikely matrix.* In some parts of each kopje the surface soil is found to be very rich; in other parts much less so; but the digger, of course, relies on his tufaceous limestone. It is dry and gritty, mostly knotted up into cakes of all sizes, from that of a walnut downwards. When adhering in a larger mass it often has sufficient elasticity to resist considerable pounding, and such rebellious lumps are thrown aside, used for the building of walls and such-like purposes. The smaller pieces, and those broken up with ease, are loaded in carts, piled in sacks and buckets, or conveyed by some means to the sieve. They are first passed through an instrument of coarse mesh, which throws out the larger lumps. For the fine sieve, the form of a parallelogram is found most useful on the fields. It is about 3 feet long by 18 inches broad, with a stout wooden frame, and a bottom of perforated zinc or iron

* I use this word matrix to express the substance in which diamonds, at the Cape at least, are actually found, and where, as I feel sure, by nature's alchemy, whatever that was, they were crystallized.

Digitized by Google

wire. At one end are two handles, made by elongating the sides of the frame. The sifter fixes in the ground two posts; to these he suspends the end of his sieve, by a rope at each corner. Grasping the handles, to hold it horizontal, he directs the negro to pile on a heap of "stuff." He then, with an easy and untiring motion, works it about upon the sieve, backwards and forwards. The nodules grind against each other, and mostly break. The finer parts fly off in a cloud of villainous dust, or drop beneath through the meshes of the wire. When nothing is left but the dry little lumps, like fine gravel—*and* the diamonds—he unhooks the sieve and carries its contents to a neighbouring table, on which it is poured before the panting "sorter."

This part of the business is the most important and the most delicate. A man may dig and sift in vain, if the sorter be incapable or untrustworthy. No mechanical ingenuity will help him in his work; it must be carried out with mere patience and vigilance. His table ought to be about 3 feet by 2 feet 6 inches, perfectly smooth, and fitted with a rim round three sides; but tables are expensive articles out yonder, and a few boards nailed together often give results much more pleasant to view than any beautiful upholstery. Such as it is, the sorter seats himself beside it, armed with an iron scraper, 6 inches long and 2 or 3 wide. With this he helps himself to a convenient quantity of the stuff, spreads it out before him, and turns it off the board. The operation is done in three motions of the elbow, taking from the heap, spreading, and throwing away. An experienced workman, who has confidence in his eyesight, performs these acts with wonderful quickness and regularity. His arm seems to move like a machine. Although there is great abundance of mica in the gravel, flakes that shine in the sunlight more brightly than diamonds, you will scarce ever see him pause in doubt.

By the mode of searching I have detailed, it is quite evident that very many diamonds are lost. I do not myself feel sure that the Cape fields would, by any process of working, yield the

Digitized by Google

quantities of tiny gems found at the Brazils. From that country are forwarded an enormous proportion of perfect crystals, varying upwards from the *ojos de moscha*, which run two hundred to the carat. I think this class of stone is not present at the Cape. Some specimens would certainly be found, were it but by accident. I have seen many very small bits of diamonds thus discovered, but they were invariably splinters. So many and so great are the differences between Brazilian and Cape diamonds, it is quite probable that this also may be a distinction between them. But if such diminutive gems were present, they would certainly fall through the sieve. Some of these instruments are so wasteful they will scarce retain a quarter-carat stone, and very few refuse passage to a smaller size. There is also the risk in loading up, which is done with a spade, as a man loads gravel; the risk of transport in a leaky cart; the risk of inattention, haste, or accident at the sorter's table. Greater even than these is the danger of letting your diamond slip, through the accident of its bearing a coat of lime. Dozens of stones are daily found, one side, or one angle, of which alone projects beyond the nodule. In this manner only are the smallest chips discovered. But every one knows well that half the gems of moderate size are bedded in a lump, which, if it resist the riddling, will carry them safely past the sorter's eye. Large stones, when they reach the sieve, fall loose at once by their own weight, but no man can guess how many of a carat each and under are daily thrown beneath the table.

But the most serious of all these losses is that caused by the big nodules I have mentioned. These will vary in size from the diameter of a man's fist to that of his head. Hundreds are daily thrown away, of a capacity to enwrap a thousand-carat jewel—ay, or a five-thousand! The roads at New Rush are lined with them like a parapet. They are built up as a wall to keep back the mountainous heaps of sifting. They are piled round tents to block out the draught, erected into cattle-kraals. In short, every

Digitized by Google

purpose for which rough stones are suitable, is there supplied with "lumps." This would be the most incredible of assertions to me had I not seen its truth with bodily eyes. There is not one amongst the diggers there who does not know better than most people what his building materials may perhaps contain. Were he so inexperienced, the first heavy shower would give him cause to suspect the truth, for he would see all the loafing population bent in earnest scrutiny of the sopped earth, and he would shortly hear of treasures picked up, perhaps at his own tent door. But no one is so ignorant. Every man knows that the fortune he is seeking may lie hidden in that dirty ball he tosses from him with a curse. And yet he tosses it! If a blow of the spade, a kick, and a few hasty thumps against the ground do not shatter the lump, he lets it lie. Comes heavy rain, and from out the mass dissolved rolls forth a monstrous gem, picked up, most likely, by a "masterless" Kaffir, or an idle follower of the camp, in open roadway. Or long exposure to the sun will make it friable, and then some-passer-by, with careless kick, will get the prize. Every day such incidents occur. The newspapers are full of them. Schemes there are always afoot for "washing out" these nodules, a process than which nothing could be simpler. It is in human nature that the men who would not pick out the treasures at their door should yet object to others picking them. The diggers of New Rush are not so greedy. I caused the question to be put to many—whether they would allow myself and partners to cart off their "lumps." Not only was permission granted, but some fellows actually offered to load the cart, if I should send it round. Anything to get rid of those "d—— lumps!" During the heavy rains which swelled the rivers in the month of January last, two men came from Hebron with their cradle, and washed out as much as they could carry. The result of one day's work was thirty-three diamonds! The size we did not hear, but it was apparently such as to content these enterprising fellows. Next day they vanished, leaving their cradle in

Digitized by Google

the veldt, and the place of them was known no more upon the fields, whether wet or dry. But to this day the lumps continue to be thrown out with rage.

The cost of such tools as are used at the dry diggings is not great. Spades and picks are scarcely 10 per cent. dearer than in England. Trade in these articles has been rather overdone. They fetch 7*s.* 6*d.* to 10*s.* Buckets are about 7*s.* A good square sieve will cost £2 10*s.*, or near it. A table, if bought new, £3. But at the auction sales, taking place every day, these articles may be had at one-half the cost. To make the set one's self, sieves and rude table, will cost about £3, altogether. A tent for three persons, new, will be £7 10*s.* to £8 10*s.* A frame house, that is, one of canvas stretched over wood, will be £8 10*s.* to £10 10*s.* for the same number. These things, again, can be bought, but not so readily, at auction, and much cheaper.

There is nothing in particular to be said of diamond digging in its sanitary effects upon the spadesman and the sifter. Both of them have hard work, and the former incurs no little peril to life and limb in the well-like claims of New Rush; that kopje, however, is mostly worked by Kaffirs, under direction of the white owner. The man who sorts is liable to more serious complaints. Sitting all day beneath the hottest sun I ever felt,—and I have travelled in either tropic,—with his eyes fixed upon a grey-white gravel; in the current, mostly, of some four or five riddles, which send forth a ceaseless cloud of lime, he is apt to contract grievous inflammations of the eye. Many protect themselves with "goggles," of wire or gauze, but not, in those cases I observed, until the mischief is done. One sees the most painful instances of this sort at Bultfontein, where men are poorer and more indefatigable for gain. A very large proportion of those millionaires at New Rush actually leave the sorting to their Kaffirs. After this, they complain of the dishonesty of the blacks, and insist upon the promulgation of unheard-of laws to repress their thefts! Mr. Commissioner Thompson told these

Digitized by Google

gentlemen some home truths upon the subject in his conference with their delegates.

Many minerals are found besides diamonds—garnets and peridots the commonest. These are of high quality, for their class, and often of unusual size. I have seen a garnet of eighty-three carats, and larger are found. The diggers call them rubies, and cannot be persuaded that they have no value when large and fine. Hundreds of poor fellows have suffered bitterly by this mistake, which has been fostered in a cruel manner by some humorous diamond dealers on the spot. No rubies, however, could be more superb in tint and brilliancy than some cut garnets I have seen upon the fields; but, when the best has no value, comparisons are useless. I transcribe from Mr. Dunn's report a catalogue of the substances found in company with the diamond; he is writing of Dutoitspan only, but there is no variety at all on the four diggings. "The sortings of the surface sand," he says, "consist of a few small nodules of carbonate of lime, diamonds, from microscopic ones to ten carats in weight, small waterworn agates, chalcedony, &c., exactly like the Vaal river-stones, but seldom reaching the size of a bean; small, sub-angular and sometimes rounded fragments of red spinel, black ditto, garnet, a green transparent mineral (peridot), a transparent colourless mineral resembling topaz, a few small quartz crystals, calc-spar, small fragments of hematite, ostrich egg-shell in fragments, bits of bone, arrow-heads, and stone chippings, but the bulk of the sortings is of broken fragments of shell, sandstone, &c. The refuse which passes through the sieve is principally reddish brown siliceous sand (largely composed of crystals), with a percentage of minute fragments of red and black spinel, transparent green mineral, titaniferous iron sand, &c. If properly cleaned, the sortings constitute about one-tenth of the surface soil."

Before quoting further, I must remind my readers that Mr. Dunn wrote at a time when deep digging was undreamed of; thus, he looks upon the surface yield of a claim as the most pro-

Digitized by Google

lific. On the same page he expresses the opinion, at that time current, that the best stratum of diamonds at Bultfontein lies between 3 and 7 feet depth; at Dutoitspan, between 5 and 9 feet. Every child at the fields knows better now; but Mr. Dunn is not to be ridiculed for his ignorance. Diamond-seeking, as it is carried on in South Africa, had no precedents, and science cannot yet lay down the broadest rule. His report is perfectly accurate in other respects.

"In the tufaceous lime which frequently succeeds the surfacing, the sortings consist principally of small lime nodules and concretions, bits of shale occasionally. On breaking the small concretionary nodules, a nucleus is generally disclosed, consisting of one or other of the above-mentioned minerals. Sometimes it is a diamond; and though diamonds are probably as numerous in the calcareous layers as in the surface covering of sand, fewer are found, doubtless owing to their coating of lime. This might be remedied by the use of water, or a careful pounding when dried. The fine particles which pass through the sieve consist of grains of sand and carbonate of lime. Nearly one-half of the calcareous stuff has to be sorted, as it is generally damp; and, during the process of sifting, instead of passing through, forms into 'pills.' Arrow-heads, egg-shells, and the same materials as occur in the surfacing, are sparingly distributed.

"The bed-rock (of decomposed igneous formation) into which the lime-layer gradually shades is for the first 2 or 3 feet dry and crumbling, passing readily through the sieves. The fragments remaining in the coarse sieves are generally lumps of sand, cemented by carbonate of lime, undecomposed fragments or nuclei of igneous rock, and fragments, sometimes rounded, of mica schist, gneiss, and shale. The sortings are mostly composed of steatitic clay, that appears firm when dry, but on becoming wet it falls into powder, bronze-coloured mica, in lumps and scales, small coarse pieces of spinel, pleonaste, and garnet. The decomposed rock is their matrix, calc-spar occurring as veins

Digitized by Google

in the decomposed rock, and gypsum. Pieces of ostrich shell, jaw, and other bones, and teeth of existing small animals, with stone chips, are met with to a depth of 14 feet. Sometimes the ostrich-shell is mineralised, having a crystalline texture."

The only addition to this catalogue which occurs to me is the substance we call "carbon," which does not appear to be enumerated, unless Mr. Dunn includes it with the shale. This carbon, I take it, is diamond arrested in its progress towards crystallization, but arrested at a much earlier stage than the "carbonate" of the Brazils. There is great resemblance between them in appearance. Both are found in irregular fragments, grey-black of colour, but whilst the latter is rough to the touch, the former is bright and shining. In degree of hardness they differ. The Brazilian carbonate is very nearly, if not quite, as adamantine as the diamond; the Cape carbon falls far behind. The former has value in consequence, being used for all those purposes which once were fulfilled by *bort*, or very inferior diamonds. In a rough state it is fixed in the borer of mining machines, and pounded, it cuts and polishes other gems. Owing to peculiarities which earn the favour of gem-cutters, it has almost displaced bort from their tables. In consequence, the latter has greatly receded in price, whilst carbonate constantly advances. From the price of 5*s.* per carat it has risen to 18*s.* and 20*s.* in twenty years. Our Cape carbon —though identically the same substance, I believe—has none of these virtues. It is perfectly useless, and ornamental not a bit. Most curious it is, however, as indicating another peculiarity of the South African diamond fields. In the chapter I propose to give upon the subject of these peculiarities, this carbon will claim another word.

Diamonds are found, *in the best claims*, at every depth, but more abundantly in one stratum or another at different points in the same kopje. No rules of Dutoitspan experience, in this respect, will help a man at Bultfontein, nor will either avail him at New Rush. Nay, more; for one digger will be sorting them out from

Digitized by Google

a certain level, whilst his rival, a hundred yards away, is toiling without result at the same depth, and in the same "stuff." Here—at No. 11 road of New Rush, for instance—the surface sand is very fruitful, whilst in rich No. 3 it might all be carted off and thrown aside with no great risk of loss. So it is all the way down; quality, quantity, size, and position of gems all appear to be regulated by rules of which we have no suspicion at all. New Rush claims in general give a vast number of stones, large in size, but not the largest—that is, the proportion over ten carats is much greater there than elsewhere, but the proportion over fifty less than at the pan—very brilliant and perfect, but nearly always coloured; and yet roads 10 and 11 supply, perhaps, the finest white diamonds of the four dry camps. Dutoitspan, almost, if not quite as rich—though sending not half as many stones to market, for reasons to be detailed—has a yield of slightly superior quality with a much less proportion over ten carats; and yet, from observations carefully made, I feel sure that this digging gives a greater number over fifty carats than New Rush. Bultfontein, on the other hand, though it lies not three hundred yards away, has a class of diamonds peculiar to itself altogether. This is a small fat gem, with very perfect angles and of excellent crystallization. Every angle is furrowed, and the surface nearly always has a frosty appearance, which makes a flaw difficult of detection. Cutters in Europe do not rank Bultfontein stones as high as we did on the fields, frequently discovering bad defects in them. Their whiteness, however, lies beyond dispute.

The central and richest portion of New Rush was worked down to an average depth of about 50 feet in November last. Some wealthy holes had been sunk much lower, even at that time, but it was an exaggeration to talk of 80 feet, as many did in the newspapers. Fifty feet is an astonishing depth, when cut in "tufaceous lime." There were, and are, no supports whatever to this great height of wall. Straight down as a plummet falls a digger worked, and from the edge of the roadway one looked down

Digitized by Google

upon a sheer descent. These roads, which are, unhappily, peculiar to New Rush, are twelve in number. They cross the kopje from side to side. Fifteen feet should be their width, but few of them actually measure two-thirds of that. Greedy and reckless diggers have undermined them in every part, and landslips more or less severe have been the consequence. Some had already given way in mass, and were bridged over; nearly all were supported by causeways of plank here and there to relieve the pressure on the edges. Not a day passed without its accident. Now a mule-cart fell over, and now a landslip crashed headlong down upon the workers underneath. Since I left, No. 9, one of the richest roads, has toppled over, parting in the middle, and left a chasm of 50 feet. This happened in the night, or some hundreds of lives would have been lost. Such as are the roads, however, New Rush was reasonably proud of them, for the elder diggings are actually made unworkable by their absence. Interpolating here a remark, I may observe that at this time, September, 1872, there seem to be no roads left at New Rush. They have all fallen in, or been cut away.

On either edge strong posts are planted, inclining towards the pit. At the overhanging top is fixed a pulley, on which buckets go up and down endlessly. Thus is the "stuff" drawn to the upper earth, and there is piled, beside the claim, until the cart comes round to bear it to the sifting place, where it undergoes the process I have mentioned. A preliminary riddling in a coarse sieve, to separate the larger lumps, is often made in the claim itself. Some successful men have built a regular staging over their claim, outside the road, on which to work a windlass. This makes the labour almost safe, and it would be well if such precautions could be exacted by law. The expense is not great; £15 was the price at which a carpenter offered to stage my quarter-claim, in which, before I had possessed it for twelve hours, a trifle of earth weighing twenty tons or so came tumbling.

When Dutoitspan, Old de Beers, and Bultfontein were opened,

Digitized by Google

no one dreamed of deep mining. Roads never entered a digger's thoughts. Every one made a hole where he pleased in his own ground, believing that to search for diamonds below two feet depth would be madness. He piled the earth excavated on the other half of his claim, intending to throw it in again and dig that also when the hole should be sorted out. Experience came upon him suddenly. His ideas extended to a matter of seven feet, then nine, and then to an indefinite point. The covered part was never cleared, but, on the contrary, the heap upon it rose daily higher. As every digger had followed his own fancy, there was, and is, no mode of access to an inner claim, even for a man of nerve, on foot, except across shifting piles of stuff and round precipitous holes, twisting and clambering. To carry loaded buckets over such a perilous route is impossible. The heaps were piled till men dreaded to work their own claims, and no human science could or can suggest a remedy for individual cases. To cart the kopje off in mass would be an easy thing, but to work or clear one claim no man could undertake. Just when things came to this deadlock over half the diggings of Dutoitspan, the marvels of New Rush were first exposed. A desperate exodus was made across the veldt. Warned by their late experience, the elected committee of the diggers passed a law that every claim should be reduced by 7 feet 6 inches along one side, for the purpose of making a roadway on which carts could pass. It was done with universal willingness.

The outside claims of Dutoitspan and Old de Beers are worked as deep, and yield, perhaps, as fine returns as the average of New Rush; but the inner parts are just a "fit" of heaps and holes. From them, such as are still in working, the earth must be carried as best it can at an hourly risk. It would appear also that the outside claim-holders have some scheme in view for their advantage in discouraging the centre diggers. Of late they have refused a right of way across their claims, and great consternation has set in, which finds a vent—perhaps a remedy—in letters to

Digitized by Google

the *Diamond News*. The case is hard, and it is possible, in a population still innocent, some good may be produced by newspaper articles. Were the fields a very little older, the merest child upon them would know too well the impotency of the press to waste a line in airing grievances, though it were in the columns of the *Times* itself.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

THE NEWEST RUSH.

Dawn at Camp—The early market—Our market master—Prices in November, '71—Uncertainty of the market—In search of the newest rush—Found at last—Its appearance—Taking out claims—Confusion in all departments of government—The vagaries of the post-office—Courtesy of Mr. Commissioner Thompson—Bultfontein House—My room therein—The beetles, the spiders, the ants, the scorpions, the goat, the intruders—Cost of repairs and furniture—Our life at "The Residence"—Our servants—Their musical lovers—Our cuisine.

MY first day at Dutoitspan broke with the splendour too common. For a month afterwards, I woke each dawn to see the same pure heaven, green as a turquoise. In other lands, the fine effects of sunrise are produced by a thousand murky clouds, which burn and glow and fall in shade. The South African sun needs no such counterfoils to dazzle. The clouds of night are all drawn off and hid before he shows himself. With twilight they vanish. On all the brightening sky not one grey stain is left when, with a bound, the sun leaps into sight. At his first glance the pale green tint rolls off like a mist dissolving, and reveals the under blue. To him who turns out earliest, as did I that day, there is no welcome to the light's return such as Dame Nature offers in more happy climes. No birds sing, no insects move; no curling mists absorb the level rays. Like a blown flame the sunshine strikes your face, eager, exultant. Blue on the dusty ground it throws your giant shadow. One instant all above is soft, pellucid ether; the next, a flaming disk leaps clear above the low white mounds of gravel. It seems to rise full armed, and one seeks shelter from its rays before the day is a half-hour

Digitized by Google

old. Fiercer grows the stilly heat with every moment, till such a point is reached as neither tropic can excel. Unkempt and yawning, the camp springs into life. The earliest beam has stirred each sleeper, and they lounge out from a thousand tents to wash in the open air. The streets begin to stir. Waggons and carts drive up to the market square, and render in the statement of their produce at the office. The broad tables of the market, set out in the middle of the square, are covered with "lots." The market-master, pocket-book in hand, climbs up, and treads amongst them gingerly. All English vegetables are found there, disposed in tiny heaps, and fruit, and meat, and game, and ostrich feathers. Great part of the interior trade has already been diverted to Dutoitspan, and the colony complains. *Karosses*, or cloaks of fur, leopard, hyena, jackal, gold and silver, lynx, springbok, otter, and all sorts of skin, have risen to double prices under the competition of the fields. Fine ostrich feathers, always expensive in the colony, fetch a fabulous price. Even ivory, in its rough state of neither ornament nor use, finds purchasers at an extravagant figure. The square is crowded long before the moment of opening. It is a rendezvous of the idle, for those who have not business in hand long since have got their breakfasts and begun the day's monotonous employ. At five o'clock the dust is flying from sieve and riddle, and the sorter's arm is moving to and fro. But those who hold in charge the catering department of their tent-fellows, crowd the market-square, and press around the tables. They form a throng as rough to view as one will meet in any country. Water at 1*s.* 6*d.* the "half-arm" is legibly written on their grimy faces. I had not here to learn how conventional are our notions upon the subject of washing. When men have urged on me the vital necessity of a morning tub for the mere preservation of existence, I have said, "Go you to the Egyptian desert, as I have done, and learn that tubbing is a luxury and nothing more." As such I have always used and enjoyed it, knowing that man *can* exist, and comfortably

Digitized by Google

too, upon one mere damping in the week. It is but a matter of getting through the first half hour of the day. The frowsy feeling passes off in that brief space, and one enjoys the succeeding hours as happily as if shampooed in a Turkish bath before breakfast. But if I had entertained any doubts at all upon this point, ten minutes' visit to the market-square would have convinced me. Scores, if not hundreds of these men, were moving evidences of the fact. They laughed, and talked, and walked about, and bid, and carried off their purchases, as like to comfortable housekeepers as need be; and none had washed his face for an indeterminate time. Two senses assured me of this truth—the eye and the nose.

Our market-master of Dutoitspan is a character. High perched above the crowd, upon his parallelogram of tables, this little gentleman pursues his calling with a rapidity most disconcerting to the boers, who form a large portion of his audience. A bucket of potatoes was put up as I reached the spot—a common zinc bucket, holding, perhaps, 12lbs. "Potatoes!" he cried, "murphies, *pomme de terres;* you can't do without potatoes; come now! What shall I say to begin? Ten shillings! Oh yes! A gentleman wants a dish of potatoes at ten shillings! He's the gentleman as found a fifty carat pure white in his glove this morning! Hard fifteen—hard eighteen—hard twenty-two-and-six—thank ye! You know what a potato is; a *pomme de terre*, a murphy! Twenty-three shillings—twenty-four—hard twenty-five—hard twenty-seven-and-six—hard twenty-seven-and-six! Come now, gentlemen, we shall have some of them New Rush chaps down on us on a knock-out if they hear tell of such prices! Hard twenty-eight shillings—hard twenty-nine —Goo-oo-oo! It's yours!" Then were put up some cabbages, which went for five and six shillings a piece—on the same day such were sold at New Rush market at ten to eleven shillings. Then onions, small ones, sold in lots of six, the lowest bid for which was two shillings each; they sold at half-a-crown. Two springboks,

Digitized by Google

entire, fetched 7*s.* and 8*s.*, but they were fine ones. A sheep might have been bought, the same day, wool and all, at from eight to ten shillings. Average prices at that time on the market-square were as follows:—Boer meal (cheap at this moment (42*s.* per *muid* (200lbs.); Kaffir corn 25*s.* per *muid;* maize meal 30*s.*; unground maize 15*s.* to 20*s.*; ducks and fowls 5*s.* each; eggs 3*s.* 6*d.* a dozen; butter 2*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* per pound; Cape brandy 10*s.* 6*d.* a gallon; dried peaches 1*s.*; wood £3 the waggon load, £1 the Scotch cart; forage for horses very fluctuating, 9*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* the bundle of 4lbs. Mutton could be bought at the butchers at 3*d.* per lb., beef 4*d.*

But there was no certainty from day to day, and farmers were discouraged by the fluctuation of prices. They never knew, until the waggons came home, what profit, if any, to expect. As there are no warehouses at all, nor any means of storing produce from day to day, the market depends upon chance arrivals. When the rivers are "up," that is, impassable, a scarcity sets in, followed by a glut when the floods subside. But the monstrously high prices of some produce, at that time, were not owing to any accident of the sort. The fact is, the resources of the country were not calculated for such a sudden strain. Every vegetable that could be spared, and every crop of forage, was eagerly sent off to the fields, but the supply ran lamentably short. Farmers in the Free State and the Transvaal, had already commenced to sow on a scale that someway might profess to meet the demand, but they were not yet prepared for market. Dutoitspan had not, and has not now, the additional burden of forestalling from which New Rush suffers. When men work their own claims, nor think of trusting Kaffirs, whose dishonesty they all allege, none can be found to meet the arriving waggons, and buy up their loads a mile or two from camp. This is done constantly by the men of New Rush. To some cause of the sort I attribute the prices given in the last newspapers I have received, which tell of potatoes sold there at a penny apiece in the end of April.

Digitized by Google

After breakfast, I walked up to Bultfontein House, and was invited by Mr. Webb to make my home there so long as I stayed on the fields. A lumber room was assigned to me for residence, and I made arrangements for having it cleared. Returning to Dutoitspan, I gave heed to the rumour of our newest "rush," and set out to visit it, with the intention of taking out a claim or two.

Accompanied by H. H., and a pleasant young German storekeeper, I chartered a cart and set forth. Although the newest rush was greatly exercising all men's souls—and tongues—no one could be found to point out its direction. We took a circling sort of flight around the camp, but the birds of the air gave no information. Boldly striking out a line which some one fancied to be probable, we crossed the veldt for a mile or two. No inspiration came of that proceeding, so we turned back again, and revolved around awhile. Oh, how hot it was on that endless flat! At length was seen a little group of Kaffirs, surrounding the carcass of a sheep, which they had skinned and hung upon a solitary bush. They pointed out a direction in which many carts had been passing all the day before, and, following that guide, we presently struck our destination.

I don't think many people believed in this last of our countless alarms. It was pooh-poohed on every side as a "canteen rush." Some man who wanted to be rid of his bar-stores had got up the excitement by nods and winks. But, with the memory of New Rush still active—a bitter memory for hundreds—none could afford to let the chance slip by. Believing or not, one must take out a claim. I followed the crowd.

It was a lonely little ridge on the farm of Vooruitzicht which drew the multitude on this occasion. The space which might be supposed to contain diamonds, measured perhaps six acres. Two or three scrubby bushes adorned its crest. Heaths and prickly shrubs clustered around their roots. The blades of sour grass sprang half-an-inch apart, but waved their grey tassels silkily.

Digitized by Google

Much of the hillock was covered with bits of limestone, which the diggers had collected to mark the limit of their claims. Perhaps there might be a couple of hundred men upon the spot when we arrived, mostly in the neighbourhood of a canteen waggon. But the far-spread lines of stone, and the labyrinth of shallow trenches, with fluttering papers thrust in a stick at every corner, showed what great numbers had already visited the spot. Some were manfully exploiting claims which would perhaps be never given them in the survey. The stuff turned out appeared to be exactly similar to that of New Rush, or Dutoitspan; but none were so inexperienced as to lay any weight upon this circumstance. Wherever I saw the surface sand removed, this substratum showed itself.

We easily found the claims which a friend had taken for us earlier in the day. Borrowing a spade, and calling two or three to witness, we threw up a bucket full of stuff, and came away, the diggers' law fulfilled. Those energetic fellows working would try the kopje for us. If it came to any good, there or thereabouts were our claims; and if it proved another "sell," we had but wasted an hour or two. A sell it proved to be, and I never again beheld my property. The history of this rush, however, had an unusual interest, for it caused to be laid down, as a law of the diggings, that elementary proposition that a man does not lose the right of property in his own ground because it chances to bear diamonds. One might have thought such a law was not needed, but therein would lie a mistake. Hitherto, a "rush" had been held, and actually upheld by argument, as a superior right to any mere private claims. The Free State distinctly admitted this, and enjoined it by law. The words of Sir H. Barkly's proclamation did not contradict, but its sense was evident. Relying upon that, and on common reason, the owners of Vooruitzicht had already protested to the Inspector of New Rush against the parcelling out of their property at the will of people they had never seen, and of whom they very particularly wished to avoid the sight. What

Digitized by Google

might have been the value of this protest, at so early a stage of the new rule, if the kopje had turned out rich, no wise man would rashly assert. It was fortunate for all parties that the spot proved a ludicrous failure. One man, however, persisted for months in digging, spite of interdicts and warnings from the proprietors. He was at length indicted for trespass, and Mr. Giddy, in a crowded and excited court, delivered judgment against him, with a penalty of five pounds. So, once for all, the almighty digger was taught that his right of confiscating people's property, on no other ground than the fact that it proved to be particularly valuable, could no longer be endured.

Everything that lies in the department of our governing powers is in desperate confusion. Last night, Mr. Commissioner Thompson, who has been visiting the dry fields, received an urgent summons to Klipdrift, with the information that the High Court would open next day at nine A.M. Starting in monstrous haste, and pitch darkness, he arrived to time, but found the ceremony deferred again. The postal arrangements are incredibly confused. An official announcement in the *Diamond News* advertised the closing of the mail to-day at nine P.M. A placard on the office door warned us to be ready before six P.M. It now appears that both were wrong, for the mail closed at nine A.M. Under these circumstances, Mr. Thompson, who has returned, put a mounted policeman at the service of some of us complainants, to whom the losing of a post was important. Just as he turned up, in gallant trim of corduroy, the post-office authorities sent word it was all right, and the mail would close at six P.M. punctually. This was the beginning or initiation of such vagaries, larks, games, antics, and *tours de force* on the part of successive postmasters, as might have driven an exact man mad with laughter. Three several times, in three months, the office was shifted; four different abodes it dwelt in, each in a quarter distant from the last.

The afternoon I employed in getting ready my room at Bultfontein House. This is the building from a wall of which

Digitized by Google

diamonds were picked out, at an early time of the diggings. It is of unburned brick, very crumbly. No roof is visible from the outside, but, looking at it from my stretcher bed, I can tell you it is flat. One half the house was at that time used by a store-keeper, and Mr. Webb's hospitality thus endured a drawback. It was wonderful to see what numerous crowds could be entertained at Christmas time and other festivals, in a dining-room twelve feet by nine, and a bedroom sixteen feet square. But the storekeeper has now left, and "The Residence" better becomes the Company's dignity. My own room measured nine feet by eight, and no man on all the diggings could be so luxuriously situated. A brick house, if you please, and thatched roof! No tent to shiver and swelter in—no iron roof to grill! Nemesis, however, hung overhead; she took the shape of beetles on this occasion. Each beam in the ceiling—we will call it ceiling—sheltered a million or so of the most industrious and lively insects of which science preserves the description. What that description is, turn up the book and see. I will only tell of them that they seemed to be all shoulders, with an invisible head. Clicking and grating, they worked day and night inside the beams, puffing out a little cloud of dust every few moments. This wood-powder lay the eighth of an inch thick over all my "furniture" in a morning. Besides the beetles, there were ants, which ate little holes in the wall. There were also fleas, which ate little holes in me. There was a vehement suspicion of scorpions, whereof I caught an excellent specimen upon the mantel-shelf of the dining-room. Snakes were thought possible, stray dogs a certainty; even a goat strolled in once and bellowed at me. The chapter of possibilities is larger at the fields than anywhere I know. Circumstance is full of fun there. Mighty uncomfortable are we all out yonder; sick for good food, good drink, and the pleasures of life. But nowhere, not even in Galway, are more, or more humorous events astir, and nowhere is there heartier laughter. The "Carbolic Chamber," as my precious room was called, had peculiar advantages for the

Digitized by Google

arrival of the unexpected. It held no communication with the house, opening only to the outside. Its door was cut in two pieces, breadth-wise, so that a man could push his head in without violating the lock. It had long been uninhabited, and vagrant creatures had learned a habit of resorting there when incapacitated for finding their way home. But with a ceiling of canvas at 26*s.*, a stretcher 25*s.*, an air mattress £10 (great luxury this, only it burst), a rug 30*s.*, two pair of canvas sheets 26*s.*, a table £2 15*s.*, a table-cloth of oilskin 16*s.*, a looking-glass 25*s.*, a board on trestles lent me by the house—three towels, 31*s.* 6*d.*, and a zinc basin 7*s.*, I was as jolly as could be, for all that beetles and fleas could do, or scorpions threaten.

Our housekeeping at Bultfontein was the most humorous thing imaginable. Mr. Webb had the misfortune to possess two maid-servants, rather "off-colour," as diggers say, but really good-looking. Nothing to compare with these girls for many a mile round. Need one tell the consequence? Lovers came wooing, and our dinner went to the dogs. Four hours every day these damsels demanded, to be employed in strolling round Dutoitspan, dressed like duchesses on the rampage. I don't wish the reader to think the poor girls worse than they were. The strolling, and dressing, and lolling about, was just an instinct, I take it, of their African nature. They had both been brought up by missionaries, and (an Africander would say, in consequence) they had endured "misfortunes" at an early age. But as the accident had not lowered them in any one's opinion of their associates, so it had not lowered them in their own. Good qualities they had, which reconciled Mr. Webb to a good deal of over-roasting and over-dressing, under-boiling and under-morality. Great familiarity with diamonds breeds contempt. Our servants pocketed the double of their wages per month by the half-crown reward for each stone discovered in laying the cloth or sweeping the floor. For sovereigns and bank-notes they received a shilling apiece. If they sang so loud with the lovers at night, under the intoxicating influ-

Digitized by Google

ence of an African moon, one at least of them never got drunk, and the other only showed vinous excitement by punching her comrade's head—a diversion that did us no harm, unless our tender hearts had been stirred, which they were not, by the wailings of that unfortunate. Then their love affairs were mighty amusing. Both entertained the addresses of gentlemen who wooed them *pour le bon motif*, and constantly brought us letters showing an abject devotion.

At five o'clock each day we were served with coffee. After that refreshment, each went to his business or pleasure until breakfast time. Certain early clients of Mr. Webb always chose this time to bring their diamonds for sale, and we had such a show sometimes upon our dining-table—dining and drawing, and console and card, and occasional table it was in one; sometimes a dressing-table also, and often a bedstead—as would rather have astonished the Posnos and the Costers in old Brazilian times. Mr. Fry meanwhile, the manager, mounted his strawberry horse to circumvent those evil-doers who were plotting to rob "The Company;" Mr. Hurley, assistant-manager and factotum, engaged himself in the same duty with equal zeal: Sometimes I accompanied these, sometimes I gathered wisdom in the matter of diamonds, and sometimes I had my own affairs, which pressed. We met again at breakfast. It always boasted various dishes, which always were the same—lumps of mutton, fried in grease; lumps of beef, fried in the same; Irish stew. That was the *menu*. Once a week we had *fricadels*. This is the most ingenious dish I know; as an example of what domestic chemistry can do, it is most valuable. I looked on it with respect on this account. The problem is, to cook together mutton, onions, spices, parsley, and the fat of a sheep's tail, in such a manner as to leave the taste of a dirty dish-cloth, and no other. Ude and Dubois would be puzzled, I take it; but there isn't a boer's wife in South Africa, bless you, that can't perform the trick.

Dinner was breakfast at a later hour. When it was over, we

Digitized by Google

had a sober glass of brandy, chased the loose dogs and cats from our abode, talked sometimes a little sentiment beneath the silver moonlight, and turned in for such rest as the serenaders of our housemaids would allow. So lived we at Bultfontein last year, as merry a little crew as could be found, though a prey to flies and fleas, and the lyrical power of our handmaidens' lovers.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

KLIPDRIFT.

A lucky digger's history—Drive to Pniel—The dogs of Pniel—Vengeance on them—The Klipdrift shore—Established and respectable appearance of this camp—The story of the concession of Klipdrift—Utter block—Mr. Webb's perseverance—Klipdrift most unsuitable as a metropolis—Out of the way, bearing no population, having no future—Dutoitspan the natural metropolis of Griqualand—Obvious objections to Klipdrift—Its distance, on the other side of a dangerous stream—Discontent of the diggers—Their criticism of the Commissioners and their acts—Unaccountable action of the Government in this matter—Unchecked sale of arms at Klipdrift—What I heard on this subject in Capetown—Opening of the High Court of Griqualand—Solemn ceremonies—Hospitality of the Bar—Return to Dutoitspan.

ON the 24th November, I set out with Mr. Webb for Klipdrift. Calling at the office of our principal lawyer in Dutoitspan, I met there a young American, whose history is given as a pet example of success upon the fields. He arrived at this place last April, with a chum. Their remaining fortune amounted to ninepence. From April to October the friends worked at a shilling a day apiece. Mr. President Parker, of whom I have spoken before, then put them into one of his numerous claims on the usual terms—the finds to be equally divided between workers and capitalist, 50 per cent. each. On November 1st, they sorted out their first stone. It is now the 24th, and M.'s partner talks of going home—with a thousand or two in his pocket, as men say. If there be truth in M., rumour underrates their winnings by some hundreds per cent., but, put at the lowest, they have no cause to complain. And there is no finality. The claim is working at this moment, though I write of eight months ago. Whether it

Digitized by Google

were a thousand or five thousand M.'s partner took home for that short spree, his share cannot be less, by this time, than very many thousands. The American told me a principle on which they worked. "Nary di'mond," he said, "do I holt after sundown. They're an article I kinder don't understand. 'Give me an offer as I can take,' says I to the di'mond kooper, 'and I'm on you like death!' Them sorter things," pulling out a roll of notes, "I've graduate in. Di'monds is fancy. I let 'em go for what they'll fetch, or ever comes sundown; and when folks talk of panics I feel considerable contempt."

We traversed the road to Pniel with the usual incidents. Saw a fine new assortment of skeletons, set out for the popular instruction without removal of the elder specimens. Lunched at the Half-way House on flies and sardines. Heard that President Brand was coming down on us with a *commando* straight away. Saw a poor fellow worn to death with fever, toiling in stages towards Pniel, with handsome cart and horses that would have borne him thither like the wind. Fell in with a terrible storm, which I would fain describe, were pen equal to depict the rush of rain, the clamorous thunder, the lightning that inflamed the very air, the sudden darkness, and the scream of wind. We took refuge awhile at Job's, and found that patient patriarch dodging the rain, and playing hide and seek with lightning. For all the shelter his tent gave, one might as well face the thing out in the open, so we set off again. The steep ravine which leads to the Vaal bank was a cataract—the high sandy ridge a quagmire. But we safely reached Pniel, of course, in time for dinner.

Nothing here had happened to change the aspect of things during five days. You may not be surprised at this circumstance, but on the fields we don't expect, don't wish, a camp to remain *in statu quo* for five whole mornings and nights. Great excitements are in store, however. The High Court is actually going to open on Monday. Its building is finished; the wigs and gowns of every barrister arrived in top condition.

Digitized by Google

I found Jardine's crammed, and was too grateful for the offer of half a bed from a brother barrister. Oh, the dogs of Pniel! Worse than our fleas and serenaders at Bultfontein are they. In the midst of an infernal concert, which the brutes perform each night, the pop, pop, popping of a revolver caused an *obligato* howl. Half asleep, and thinking of old experiences in another continent, I concluded there was a difficulty somewhere round, and "lay dark," following the advice of an old miner given me in Chontales five years ago. "If there's a shooting anywheres round," says he, "you lie by and drink gin. But if it comes too close to your toes, then riz you in yer wrath, an' give 'em h——." But it was only a gentleman of the neighbourhood, whose Christian principles could no longer restrain his fury. In the course of the night's sport, he shot two dogs, a puppy, a waggon, and sprung a leak in the pont-boat moored below.

Next day I was desperately ill, but managed to creep down to the river by afternoon, and get into a ferry-boat. The Vaal ran very low at this time, and one might almost step from rock to rock across its bed in several places. The banks are lined with tall and handsome willow trees, whose green delights the wearied eye. Both inclines are steep, especially that on the Klipdrift side. The breadth of the river in this part varies according to the rainfall. At present, it was about seventy to eighty yards wide, but the average of summer should be half as much again. There is a large pont or ferry-boat here, for the conveyance of cattle, carriages, and waggons. Some dozen or so of row-boats hang about for custom, charging sixpence a passenger for the transport.

The towering Klipdrift shore is a red, burnt heap of shingles, lightly strewn with sand. Fine trees shade it, but the numerous stumps around show how many of their noble fellows have been sacrificed. The Diggers' Committee—not sentimental folks in a general way—were stirred to wrath by the havoc going on, and decreed that no more timber should be cut within five miles of

Digitized by Google

camp. Climbing the pebbly bank, a foot passenger comes out by Sanger's Hotel, a really creditable building, neat, commodious, and well maintained. In all respects except the flooring, which is indeed mere sorted stuff carried from beneath the tables, Sanger's would compare with the best of colonial inns. And "sortings" make a capital floor, prejudice apart; comfortable to walk upon, they find employment also for the eye, in a constantly furtive search for that big diamond which has escaped the sorter's scrutiny.

Klipdrift, though not so old as several of the river diggings, is the only camp which looks respectably stable. The frequent houses of brick, and liberal use of "rough cast," produce this effect. Even stores have an air of permanency here. A "stoop" of plank or stone is laid in front of them, sometimes with a neat railing along it, and steps up. No shop on the rich dry diggings is so handsome or so large as one or two here. The street, too, has a straggling regularity that seems to tell of ancient divisions, accidents, eccentricities. As a matter of fact, the settlement of Klipdrift was at this time about two years old. It has one street, sufficiently well kept, that descends from the crest of the ridge lengthwise with the river. In front of Sanger's is a little square, quite empty. At the mouth of the "drift," or roadway to the pont and boats, a few small canteens are standing, but the mere digger element has so utterly dwindled here that such places find little custom. As a digging, Klipdrift may be said to have dropped from the list. It is now to be reckoned as a seat of trade, for the river camps, and as the temporary metropolis of Griqualand West. As such, an air of dignity and sedateness becomes it. There are actual gardens at Klipdrift! yes, and neat little cottages.

The population is officially estimated at six hundred. This is certainly not beneath the mark. Twelve months ago, in the height of its meretricious glory, the camp was reckoned at five thousand, besides the busy throng of Pniel just opposite. It was this terri-

Digitized by Google

tory, with the river diggings on the same bank, which the Transvaal republic claimed, and over which they gave the right of mining to certain English gentlemen. An amusing story is the tale of that concession, with its results. The gentlemen who had been so far-seeing as to perceive the value of Klipdrift while it was yet a desert place, known only as a ford of the Vaal River, obtained their grant under solemn seal and bond of the Transvaal Parliament, or *raad*. Most cautious and business-like was the stipulation of respective rights; most accurate the calculation of royalties; most dire the pains and punishments of each infraction. Armed with a power which gave them the monopoly of digging on the north bank of the Vaal, the concessionaries returned to their desert Eldorado;—and behold, it was a hive, a buzz, a swarm of men, digging and washing, cradling, sorting, and putting money in their pockets! The astonished monopolists rubbed their eyes. Assured of the fatal truth, they whispered gently of their claim. Mr. President Parker—a most worthy fellow—took them aside, and in grewsome tones he warned them, "Don't say a word," muttered he, "they don't know you're here! If they did, they'd hang you on a tree!" But Mr. Webb was not a likely man to be awed by this threat. He appealed to the power which had granted a patent beyond its means of execution. Mr. President Pretorius came down in state, and looked about him, and withdrew in haste;—being, it is said, rather embarrassed by the opposition President. All the poor fellow could reply to Mr. Webb's remonstrance was a peevish appeal to his common sense. "Look at the place, sir," he said, "and tell me what I can do. There aren't men enough in the Transvaal to turn these people out. Your rights, sir? Your concession, sir? It is all very well to talk in that way, but look for yourself—look for yourself!" So the President returned in state to his capital—it has three hundred inhabitants, if you include the black people—and laid the matter before his *raad*. Not the wisest amongst those counsellors had

Digitized by Google

so much as the hint of a suggestion. And so, in Pretoria, it was resolved to drop the subject.

But although this course was urged on them as a Christian duty by the friends of the badgered president, it did not commend itself to Mr. Webb and his partners. He declined to drop the subject. If the Government could not give him Klipdrift, they must at least offer compensation for the loss of time, and the serious expense he had been at. To the communication making this demand, Mr. Pretorius, at his wits' end, gave no reply at all. Then the Lieut.-Governor issued his famous award, and the Transvaal turned out its President in a rage. Now, at least, the *raad* thought, we are rid of this concession, having lost the territory in dispute, and also dismissed the concessionist. Mr. Webb did not see it in that light, and the first state paper, probably, which came within the notice of Pro-President Erasmus was an eloquent reiteration of the old claim. So far as I know, Mr. Erasmus has, up to this time, imitated the masterly silence of his predecessor. The fact is, never was a government in a position so ludicrous, unless it be our own rulers at this moment of writing, June 15th.

Brick-built and substantial as Klipdrift is, it cannot continue to be the metropolis of Griqualand West. The idea, indeed, is absurd. We have no reason to believe that any diamond field will be found north—or, as colonists call it—west of the Vaal River. I know of two districts which would certainly pay to work; but one is in Albania, to the south-west, and the other far away beyond the boundary. There may, or there may not, be more kopjes in the neighbourhood of our present dry diggings, but no human being has suggested that any lie beyond Klipdrift. So far as the Government at Capetown can be supposed to have formed any theory on the subject, we must believe they were influenced by the fact that it stands nearer the middle of the territory than any other settlement. But the centre of a country is that point to which the most and largest interests converge. This

Digitized by Google

point, in Griqualand West, is Dutoitspan, and, so far as we can see, will continue to be. I have said that not the most sanguine anticipate discoveries of diamondiferous ground beyond Klipdrift. And, without hinting that such will be found in the neighbourhood of Dutoitspan, I must point out that that kopje itself will be yielding gems for a considerable time to come, as will Old de Beers and Bultfontein, neither of which are provided with roads for working out the stuff. The trading route through Hopetown to the interior has already been diverted thither. Every business man of the colony feels sure that Dutoitspan is destined to be an important centre.

I put on one side the fact that Klipdrift is the natural headquarters of some hundreds of vagrant diggers, whilst the pan is looked on as a capital by fifty thousand substantial men. The Government might be justified in disregarding this fact were it temporary or accidental. But had they taken the advice of any one who knew the land, they might have learned that their metropolis is a central point for sheep-farmers only, whose interests up there, compared with diamond mining, are as a penny to a thousand pounds; whose aim is to get land—and keep it—at a population ratio of one to the square mile; who have no use at all for a metropolis, no law cases, no troubles, no risks nor sudden dangers. One of the pleas on which the English Government took possession of the fields was that of preserving order and obviating perils which might ultimately have become most serious. How does it justify its action on this ground? By posing the seat of authority twenty-five miles away from the spot where danger might arise, across a broad and dangerous river, which sometimes becomes impassable for weeks. Here is shrewd action. The Commissioners had not long been established in their comfortable quarters by the Vaal before receiving demonstration that the seat of Government is awkwardly chosen. The riots of New Rush, whereof hereafter, took place, and most serious evils threatened. The burning of the tents occurred at three o'clock;

Digitized by Google

the march to Dutoitspan was arranged for five; special constables began to be sworn in at the latter place about four, and we were prepared for a desperate encounter. Where were the Commissioners? Safe at the metropolis, of course, dreaming the happy hours away across the river. It is said that the news of what had happened reached them at midnight. Had the rioters followed their worse instincts, the same messenger might have brought news that all the dry camps were blazing.

If the Cape Government supposed that the dignity of the Crown would be better served by its representatives in keeping aloof from the crowd, the Cape Government showed extraordinary ignorance of its digger subjects. They would have done almost more wisely in carrying logic to its bitter end, and in so far preserving the extremest dignity of the Crown as not to send any Commissioner at all, with whom the populace might get too familiar. Diggers say, in so many words, "The Government is afraid of us!" Will that impression tend to diminish peril? A smaller party, more cool-headed but more indignant, puts the matter thus: "We were told that our previous condition threatened certain dangers. We do not believe it, but the English Government thought so, and kindly gave us first a magistrate (Mr. Campbell), and then its full protection, unasked. No one objected in particular. We hoped to have some grievances remedied, and to obtain a security for personal rights and property which, though never violated, were not quite so well ascertained as might be. What is the result? Three gentlemen have been sent to us who reside across the river. One of them no man of us has ever seen, another we do not approve—nor have once beheld since his appointment—and the third is worked to death with doing the duty of his colleagues, besides a crush of business in his profession. We know nothing of these gentlemen, and what do they know of us? The annexation, which was to bring such advantages, has hitherto only increased our evils. We don't want the magistrates the Free State gave, who ruled only by

Digitized by Google

common sense, and, when that guidance failed, frankly gave up the conundrum; but we do want such men as will keep the roads orderly and safe, as they did; who will take the trouble to live amongst us, as they did, and learn what are the necessities of our life here; who will be upon the spot when danger rises, as they were, and confront evil doers with the majesty of the law. We don't want, and we will not have, *fainéant* officials to rule our rich and industrious community, whether commissioners, magistrates, or inspectors."

I believe it was mostly ignorance which caused the Cape authorities to appoint Klipdrift as the seat of government for Griqualand West. On no grounds can it be justified, and the feelings of the digger population are very bitter against it. The one fact that all actions at law, beyond such police matters as lie within the cognizance of the magistrate, must be transported thither, with all the array of witnesses, is sufficient to arouse indignation.*

Residence at Klipdrift has one great charm. The land being disputed by Waterboer and the Transvaal—not to mention Mr.

* Writing now, after the second riots of New Rush, I can justify, by example, the words above. Again the diggers have broken into violence, and again the Commissioners have failed to understand the situation. That Klipdrift retreat is too comfortable. There was indeed, in this later time, one Commissioner, provisionally appointed, at the scene of interest—Mr. Giddy. Though a gentleman of strong nerve, great tact, and ready resource—as is shown in events, detailed hereafter, which occurred under my own eyes—he judged the crisis to be so important, as to demand exceptional and, perhaps, illegal measures. Mr. Giddy decreed that no black should henceforth hold a claim—a hard measure, but one necessary. *Salus populi suprema lex.* With twenty thousand rioters, threatening all order and all safety, one must not scan too closely the code of law. Already murder had been committed—to what extent will never be known. The commandant of the Dutoitspan police, Mr. Gilfillan, the younger, had been held over a blazing tent, and had narrowly escaped from the furious rioters. There was no force, nor ever can be a force, on the fields—without rating or taxation of the diggers—that could restore order. Mr. Giddy's proclamation had at least the effect of stopping these intolerable outrages. But the other Commissioners, in Klipdrift, promptly annulled it, without offering any suggestion to produce the desired effect. In consequence, the disturbances began again; and it may safely be predicted that they will again and again arise.

Digitized by Google

Webb's rights—no rent had been paid for a length of time. But the regard to economy cannot have been pushed so far by Government as to make this a point in favour of the spot as a capital.

On the Monday morning I saw a sight which was calculated to startle one. It proved to be common enough, however. This was a sale of rifles at the store of Messrs. Reid. Those who bought were Corannas and Kaffirs. The street appeared to be possessed by a negro army. Round the shops was a crowd of hundreds pressing in. From its open door a stream of armed men struggled out ceaselessly. Each carried a rifle, some with the bayonet screwed on. The purchasers hung round the outskirts of the crowd, comparing the merit of their respective arms, until a body of eighteen or twenty were collected. They then marched away in line. So fast the bargains were concluded, these groups seemed to file past in a grotesque parade. Many of them had no covering whatever, except a tail of jackal hanging in front. Those were the Zulus. But every man carried an excellent rifle, Tower marked, one of the muzzle-loading Enfields discarded from the English army. These were sold at £3 each, £3 5*s*. with bayonet. It was stated that five hundred stand had been disposed of that morning. It will be borne in mind that the arbitration of Mr. Keate had restored to the Coranna chief, Monkoran, all the land between the Hart and Vaal, of which the Transvaal boers had deprived him. The English Government, however, has no idea of enforcing this award, which has thrown Corannas and boers alike into great agitation. Nine in ten of the negroes who armed themselves at the cost I have stated belonged to Monkoran's people. The intention of that chief to help himself is avowed everywhere. He waits only for the formal answer of our Government to his appeal for assistance. These Corannas were arming themselves in time for a cruel war.*

* The determination of Monkoran may be guessed from the fact that he offered a gentleman at the fields, late captain of hussars, a salary of £500 a-year, to drill and command his troops. Captain ———, I am happy to say,

Digitized by Google

Watching this sight in amazement, I perceived Mr. Commissioner Thompson similarly occupied. Though not yet introduced to that gentleman, I ventured to ask of him how such an exhibition could be possible. He replied, indignantly, that it was a disgrace to the country and to England, but he had no power to interfere. In conversation with Sir Henry Barkly and Mr. Southey, long afterwards, I found that the Commissioner underrated his authority. He might peremptorily have stopped the sale of arms, which were notoriously purchased for use against a people "friendly" to us, in the diplomatic sense of words. But with such a load of heavy work upon his shoulders, the young Attorney-General of Griqualand might well become somewhat confused. Perhaps public fame did Mr. Campbell great injustice —Mr. Bowker was an invalid from the first and quite unfit for work —but all the labour and thought of the Commission seemed to fall upon Mr. Thompson, who had already his important legal duties to perform.

A common justification of the sale of arms to negroes is this: that with a rifle in his hands your black enemy is much less dangerous than with an *assegai*, or spear. Knowing nothing about the comparison, I am quite willing to believe that this may be true. But it will not be asserted by any experienced traveller that your Kaffir or negro is physically unable to shoot straight. Some of the best hunters and marksmen in the world are Africans. Plainly, the fear of a gun, and the ludicrously bad shooting of our black subjects at the Cape, are owing to a want of familiarity with the weapon. I should suppose that not less than 20,000 rifles, mostly as good arms as one could find, have been sold to natives working at the diamond fields—10,000 is the lowest estimate I ever heard from those storekeepers who would give me an opinion. It is to buy a gun that Kaffirs cheerfully undergo a whole year's

owns such a claim at New Rush that money cannot tempt him; but he recommended an old companion in arms for the post, and the recommendation, I believe, is accepted.

Digitized by Google

risk and labour in the claims. Scarcely a man leaves his work without one. I have met returning Zulus and Corannas, in the veldt, by twenties in a company, every one armed. It is thus evident that the requisite familiarity will soon be obtained. Another argument in the mouths of those who indulge this lucrative traffic is the silence of the Transvaal itself. "The boers don't complain," it is said, "because they would rather fight Monkoran's people armed with guns than with spears." If this desire were proved it would certainly be conclusive. But neither the desire nor the silence supposed to express it are facts. I am informed by the Colonial Secretary that the Transvaal Government has bitterly complained at Natal, and the authorities there have recriminated. Both alike have protested against Cape Colony. In point of fact, the Transvaal is perhaps less endangered than Natal by these sales. Corannas are a race Hottentot by blood, possessing much of the ferocious timidity of the Bushman. Natal Kaffirs, as everybody knows, are amongst the bravest people of the world. They are now peaceful and contented, but to arm them is an act of madness. The sale of guns has always been restricted with the utmost legal care. Permission to land arms at a port, to hold them, and to load them away, have all to be obtained under affidavits, declarations, licenses, pains, and penalties. These laws hold force in Griqualand, under clause 2 of proclamation 68. But no attempt is made to enforce them. It seems scarcely worth while to pass angry dispatches to and fro, accusing one province or the other of letting the smuggled rifles slip through, while it is in the power of any magistrate to confiscate them when arrived at their destination. If more haste be not used, Kaffirs, Corannas, and the rest, will be, each and all, armed nations before the responsibility for that result is accurately distributed.

At twelve o'clock the High Court really opened. There was a considerable crowd around the small wooden building set apart for its deliberations. By the courtesy of Mr. Thompson, I occu-

Digitized by Google

pied a seat amongst my brother barristers within the railings. They all were arrayed in orthodox wig and gown, a sight which struck the foreign diggers with alarm. Though anybody can make cheap fun of this pretension to ceremony, there is a point of view from which it appears both prudent and dignified. Nothing can be justly considered foolish which tends to impress a reckless population, far removed from the seat of order, with the comprehension that every customary form of law may be made to reach them. Nine-tenths of those present, whether Colonial or English born, had been used to the antique and venerable costume of our bar. Their respect for the High Court was certainly not decreased in observing that its members used as formal ceremony there as in the proudest tribunals at home.

Mr. Barry made his appearance when all were seated; then followed the swearing, which appeared to be universal. Everybody within the rails, except myself, swore to something. Then Mr. Barry, who was addressed as "my lord," declared the High Court of Griqualand open as a supreme tribunal, from whose decisions there is no appeal. It was then arranged that defended cases should stand over for another week, and the court adjourned till next day. Most of us retired to an hotel, where champagne and other wines flowed freely at the expense of the bar, the members of which already saw their way to lots of work and abundance of fees. About four P.M. we set out on our return to Dutoitspan.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

DIARY OF EVENTS.

Abandon of newest rush — Furnishing my chamber in the Residencé — Dissolution of the Committees and revocation of their laws—Sudden death of Mr. Webb's boy—The behaviour of our musical maid-servants in this event—Awful rumours of plague—A curiosity in diamonds—Diamond picked up in the road at our door—A doctor's stories of the epidemic—Influence of the Marabastad gold fields—Inspector Rorke's proceedings—Jumping claims—The new rules—Cape rubies or garnets—Litigation at the fields—Alarming rumours at New Rush—Story of a typical digger—The meeting in the market square—The audience, the chairman, the speakers—Opposing parties—Mr. Kelsey's harangue—The end of these proceedings—The Commissioners refuse to recognise the result—My fellow-passengers of the *Cambrian* arrive—Alexandersfontein House—Irrigation there—The official report of deaths at Dutoitspan—Analysis of it—Object of the panic-mongers—Luck at last for S.—Revisit New Rush—First notice of the tent license—Justice of that attempt—A proof that time is money here—I look out the ninety-five carat Bultfontein claim — Its present condition — Abandon all hope of clearing it—The canteen law proclaimed—Prices of claims at New Rush—A Kaffir trader—Buy a quarter claim—My agreement for the working of it—Confusion of affairs at the Post-office—The great digger Bantje—Gutter-picking for diamonds—Bullied by a well-sinker—First prophecy of the New Rush riots.

IN this chapter I propose briefly to set out the occurrences of public and private interest that took place under my notice in the month following. The beginning of the disillusion speedily manifested itself at the newest rush. Of the crowd of claims taken out, not fifty were in working by Tuesday, November 28th. Suspicious from the very commencement was the fact that no one had claimed the reward offered by digging rules for a find in a new locality. Anybody discovering a new field is by them

Digitized by Google

enjoined to make the circumstances known to the committee, under pain of expulsion from the diggings; his reward lies in a grant of four free claims. No declaration had ever been made on behalf of this new kopje, and men began to ask who had first started the rush; to this question there was no answer. Being now established at Bultfontein House, I made arrangements with an Australian paddy—the best working man alive—to floor my chamber with ants' nests, and wash it with cowdung, which duty he performed on this and following days.

On November 29, a proclamation of the Commissioners dissolved all the diggers' committees, and abrogated their rules; at the same time the population was invited to call a meeting for the purpose of appointing a new committee to re-enact such of them as were advisable for the preservation of order, and did not clash with English law. This decree arrived just in time to avoid a conflict of jurisdiction. The proprietors, through Mr. Webb, had been fined £5 by the Committee of Dutoitspan for granting a respectable black man a license to dig on that kopje. On the very next day the case would have come before Mr. Gilfillan, the police magistrate, on appeal, and might, besides the contest of jurisdiction, have prematurely raised the Nemesis of the fields—the *spectre noir*. The diggers were, and are, determined black men shall not share their privileges; the English Government has refused to make distinctions from the first; both parties have temporised as yet.

We had a sensation at Bultfontein to-day of the most unpleasant kind. A Kaffir boy in Mr. Webb's service fell dead across the kitchen threshold: he had been ill of a slow fever about two weeks past, but no one had thought the matter serious. I was curiously impressed with the coolness of our musical maid-servants in this event. As there happened to be no "boys" about, they took the corpse, head and heels, within three minutes of his instantaneous death, and carried him to an outhouse, and laid him down, after which they cheerfully returned to the preparations

Digitized by Google

for dinner. Watching their behaviour through the window, I could not but think how much more decent, and how infinitely more foolish, would have been the conduct of two English girls of their class in such a case. They'd have cried over the man as if they loved him, screamed as though man had never died before, spoilt the dinner of us living folks, and never done one jot of benefit to the corpse; but, as our handmaidens had not the virtues, so they had not the vices, of civilisation.

My attention thus abruptly called to the sanitary condition of the camp, I find the air to be full of grewsome rumours. The belle of Dutoitspan lies dying of virulent typhus; a woman was brought in from the veldt this morning, dead long since, with a bundle untouched beside her; a well-known digger has died to-day; another young lady is given up. New Rush appears to be one great hospital. I am determined to ascertain the real facts about this matter. We had great difficulty in getting our poor Kaffir buried.

I saw, November 30, a curiosity in mineralogy, which had been found at New Rush; it was a conglomerate of tiny diamond crystals, dark and discoloured, fixed as closely together as fish spawn, which the lump much resembled. One could neither scratch nor displace one stone from the mass, which might be an inch long by three-quarters broad; it seemed to be as solid as a single crystal. In the midst, projecting half-an-inch on three sides, less on the other, was a fine diamond, oblong in shape, which experts roughly calculated at sixteen carats. This stone did not reach the bottom end; the place it would have occupied, if long enough, was filled up with "spawn," as I shall call it; but in another part of the mass, at this bottom end, a second stone showed itself, calculated at five or six carats. Only one side of this was visible. Diggers thought both one and the other of these gems to be white and perfect; but they looked greenish, embedded in the "spawn," and much crackled. The whole weighed eighty-three carats, and it was offered to me for £150. I was much tempted to buy, for

Digitized by Google

I cannot think that such a specimen was ever seen before; but the price was one to chill scientific ardour. The object was sent in the end to Germany, and bought for the museum of Berlin or Vienna, I forget which.

On December 1, a boy brought in to us a pretty little stone weighing three-quarter carat, which he picked up on the road beside the house; such discoveries are constantly made. Met a doctor at Benning and Martin's, who told me he had been drinking beer in a friendly way last night with two men who were found dead this morning; also, that he had been called in to-day to examine a digger who sat dead at his table, with his head leaning on his hands; conceived a mean idea of this doctor's veracity. The accounts of the gold-fields at Marabastad are drawing thither many diggers, chiefly old Australians.* Inspector Rorke is issuing licenses to dig, for three persons, at 5*s.* per month, contrary, as Mr. Webb alleges, to the governor's proclamation. Dutoitspan is private ground without reservation of minerals; and although the English Government has made the open digging public, it has neither power nor will to lower such rates as the proprietors had charged with full concurrence of the diggers. This sum is 10*s.* 6*d.* a month, no matter how many be in the party. The inspector may charge extra money for every hand over three; but he cannot reduce the original license. The meeting of diggers to pass new rules for the internal order of the fields is postponed till to-morrow.

December 2.—Had a long talk with the indefatigable fellow who works just below the house. He told me he had "jumped" the claim six weeks ago, and had no cause to curse his luck. I don't know that I have explained this term "jumping." When a digger vacated his claim for eight consecutive days, not putting pick in it, nor sorting stuff, it became "jumpable" by the old

* I do not think it necessary to say more about this Free State gold rush. What I learnt inclined me strongly to discredit it, and subsequent events justified that conclusion.

Digitized by Google

committee rules, and the first man who noticed its idleness might take it. By the proclamation, jumping was done away with in favour of public auction by the inspector, to be held on the very claim in question; at the same time the rule of jumpability was made more stringent. It is no longer enough that a pick should be put in, or a spadeful carried away, the claim must be "worked *bonâ fide*" within the space of every eight days, or it becomes liable to auction. It was at first a matter of grave dispute what constituted *bona fides* in digging, an expression, indeed, as vague as well could be found. All parties finally agreed that a table-load of stuff must go through the full process of digging, sifting, and sorting, to constitute *bona fides*. But the actual change of law went no further than this for six months. No clause of the proclamation was more unpopular than that which abolished jumping, and the inspectors never seemed to make an effort for enforcement of the new rule; it is quite true that they had no opportunity to quit the office, where business came to them at all hours. However, a day or two before I left, in March, '72, three claims at Bultfontein were confiscated and publicly sold.

This digger also held forth to me upon the subject of rubies. He told me that a man just above had found one of twenty-eight carats without flaw, for which Mr. Unger had offered him £600. Discrediting the tale, of course, I made further inquiries, and found that the diamond merchant referred to had said to the poor fellow in a jesting way, "I suppose you wouldn't take £600 for this?" The other hastily refused, and straightway dispatched his treasure to England, when it probably realised 1*s*. per carat as a garnet.

Diggers are decidedly a litigious lot, and half-a-dozen sound and sober lawyers would thrive here amazingly. Looking in at Mr. A.'s office, I was shown there two tiny diamonds, about one-third carat each, the first finds of two men who had taken a claim in partnership at Dutoitspan; they had fallen out about them straight away, and lodged counter actions in the inspector's court. These

Digitized by Google

were alike the sinews of war and the prize disputed. They might have been worth 10*s*. the pair.

Went to New Rush, December 2, with an ex-officer of Louis Philippe's army. That kopje is much excited by a rumour that the proprietors intend to raise the monthly license to £10. Looking carefully through the proclamation, I cannot perceive that such a course would be illegal; but it is simply impossible the Commissioners should allow it upon the scale contemplated. With an army at their back the increased fee could not be collected; they have no army, only a mutinous and inefficient police It would be madness to provoke the diggers. We had heard that the *Diamond News* of to-day would contain an announcement to the above effect; but I was pleased to find nothing more irritating than some new regulations of the wood and grazing license. At the same time, there is every reason to believe that the prevalent alarm had some foundation. The proprietors of New Rush see their kopje lessening every day, and the sight urges them to make hay whilst the sun shines. Dutoitspan is in a different position; its owners can well content themselves with their present revenue, seeing that each day increases the confusion of that kopje, and works for their ultimate benefit. A typical digger was pointed out to me at the bar of the Blue Posts. He had found a stone, for which he asked £60; the offer of £50 was angrily refused. He took it to Klipdrift, and hawked his diamond, and "spreed about" three days; he then sold it for £50. His expenses had been £11, and he lost the balance coming home drunk. He only observed, it was a blank good time, and the blank koopers of Dutoitspan didn't get his stone after all; if he'd only knowed he was going to lose the blank balance, he'll be blanked if he'd not have taken it out in punching some of their blank heads. Dr. Gibson tells me he doesn't think the mortality of New Rush at all alarming. He says, allowances made, it will bear comparison with the average of continental towns. It is to be observed that we are ninety per cent. of grown men here; but,

Digitized by Google

on the other hand, a large proportion come with constitutions undermined by dissipation.

When I got back to the Pan the adjourned meeting was just commenced. Captain Rorke, inspector of claims, had formally opened it, and invited those present to speak and vote. There after he retired. The assembly met in the market square, where the tables on which our market-master is wont to stride gave its speakers a lofty station. There were, perhaps, a couple of hundred men to represent the thousands who sifted and sorted within our sight. It is idle to deny that they were not a prepossessing crew. The best men of the kopje shone by their absence. Those present appeared to me mostly agitators, who could not, of course, agree amongst themselves. But it was painful to remark how many bleared and disfigured eyes there were in the assembly. Diamond digging is a profitable occupation, but verily *on y joue sa peau.* I perceived, also, that two classes, antagonistic to each other, were face to face. There was the digger, bleared and grimy, with loud voice, strong arm, and aggressive individuality. There was also the younger man, scarce less grimy, as strong of arm, and as loud-voiced on occasion, but bearing always that *cachet* in tone and manner which marks the gentleman, or person of society. There is a *jeunesse dorée* of Dutoitspan, though it be not so numerous or so prominent as that of New Rush. These classes were evidently opposing one another, and the cheers of one were always chorused by the ironical laughter of the adversary. A certain Mr. Devigne took the chair; that is, he mounted the table, and stood aloft under the shade of a great umbrella upraised by a black man. Who elected him to this honourable prominence I could not make out. Then somebody shouted out the name of Mr. Kelsey, and another cried, "I second that!" Without further ceremony, Mr. Kelsey climbed the table, and began to make a speech. Whilst this proceeded, with considerable strength of lung, another name was shouted, another seconder backed it, and a third digger, "in his habit as he lived"—a very dirty habit—

Digitized by Google

mounted to his comrades; a fourth was similarly appointed. But the *jeunesse dorée* began to get its back up. In the loud wrangle that ensued, I made my way to the table, and obtained the advantage of Mr. Kelsey's eloquence. Its framework seemed to be a series of interjections, interrogations addressed to his "brother diggers!" Something in this style the oratory ran:—"Did we invite this 'ere English annexation, brother diggers? No, we didn't: we didn't ask it, and we don't want it. We was content with the old Committee and its rules, wasn't us, brothers? Those gentlemen understood the wants of diggers, and provided for 'em. These Commissioners don't know nothing about us. I ask you, brother diggers, was there ever a diamond digging like this afore? No! Well, then, what do these Commissioners know about it? What does the Cape Parliament, or what does the English Parliament know about it? Nothing! Very well, then, let us be ruled by them as does know; and if we are to vote, let us vote for the old Committee back again, and all the old rules. That's your ticket, brother diggers! The old Committee and the old rules!"—and some strong language followed. After twenty minutes of this, Mr. Kelsey jumped down amidst the throng, in a thunder of cheers from his friends, and ironical laughter from the other party.

Then a Dutchman—a boer, that is—climbed up and attempted to address the meeting in Cape Dutch. It is so very seldom one sees a man of his race able to use any customs of this sort, that I was pleased to observe the ease and gravity of his bearing. What he said I did not understand, nor could have caught if I had comprehended, so great a row was going on. The swell party had proposed and seconded several of their number, who seemed to have quite as good claim as the others. Things now had reached such a state of confusion, that Mr. Devigne adjourned the meeting till five P.M. How many gatherings of the sort was I destined to see, all terminating in the same result—nothing! The reign of democracy had passed; the glamour of agitators had

Digitized by Google

vanished before the dignity of English officials. Mr. Parker, the most powerful of all the body, quite withdrew himself after the annexation; so did Mr. Finlayson, a man of great influence. To conclude this story, Mr. Kelsey's advice was taken at the adjourned meeting, and the old Committee, just dissolved, was re-elected, under express instructions to repass all the abrogated rules. Of course, the Commissioners declined to acknowledge this result.

Sunday, Dec. 3.—Rain all night, and clouds and wind through the morning. In the late afternoon, five fellow-passengers by the *Cambrian* drove past in a cart, which they had hired in Capetown for £50. That adventurous ride from Saldanha Bay had thus saved me a fortnight's time. A sixth fellow-passenger had made a mad attempt to ride the distance on horseback, keeping up with a six-horse waggon. Of course he had broken down, though his friends good-naturedly relieved him in the saddle as much as they could. Finding him resolute not to start after a certain outspan, and equally resolute to fight a duel with each of them in turn, they reluctantly abandoned him. A week or two afterwards he tramped in on foot.

Dec. 5.—Alexandersfontein, which I revisited one day, is certainly a fine house, abounding, as one may say, in large and lofty rooms. For what on earth any boer farmer could build such a barrack, in the wilderness this country was, no man can guess. The farmer himself is now digging diamonds on the land he sold, a tenant. People have asked him what he meant by it, and he seems to have no better notion than others. The garden is well planted with figs and peaches, which are covered with fruit, but withering. The system of irrigation has been neglected for some months past, but Mr. Webb is opening all the springs he can find. This needs to be done with caution, for though water is struck almost everywhere round the house, much of it is *brack*, or salt.

The ghastly tales of disease prove to be, as I expected, all moonshine. I have obtained from the registrar of deaths such

Digitized by Google

figures as prove this; the same official is also registrar of births, but he has not yet been called upon to act in that capacity. His books begin with Nov. 22nd, and these are their entries, names omitted:—

Nov. 22.	Dutch baby	aged 14 days		Convulsions.
,, 23.	English ,,	,, 10 months		Fever.
,,	,,	,, Unknown		Consumption.
,,	Dutch ,,	,, 2 years		Hooping cough.
,, 24.	Native boy	,, Unknown		Unknown.
,,	,,	,, ,,		Murdered.
,, 26.	Englishman	,, 62 years		Inflammation of Lungs.
,, 27.	English baby	,, 10 months		Dysentery.
,,	,,	,, 14 days		Convulsions.
,,	Dutch ,,	,, 9 months		Dysentery.
,, 29.	Native boy	,, Unknown		Fever.
,, 30.	English baby	,, 1 year 8 months		,,
Dec. 1.	Englishman	,, 18 years 9 months		,,
,,	Dutchman	,, 33 years		,,
,,	Englishman	,, 40 years		Apoplexy.
,,	Dutch baby	,, 6 months		Unknown.
,, 2.	,,	,, 4 years 5 months		Croup.
,,	English boy	,, 12 years 6 months		Dysentery.
,,	Dutch baby	,, 8 months		Fever.
,,	Dutchman	,, Unknown		Burned.
,, 3.	Native	,, ,,		Fever.
,,	Dutch baby	,, 5 months		Dysentery.
,,	,, girl	,, 19 years		Fever.
,,	,, baby	,, 1 year 11 months		Diarrhœa.
,, 4.	English baby	,, 16 days		Convulsions.
,,	Englishman	,, 30 years		Unknown.
,,	Dutch baby	,, 11 days		,,
,,	Englishman	,, 52 years		Dysentery.
,,	Unknown white man	,, Unknown		Found dead in street.

This is no startling catalogue of deaths in a population of fifteen or twenty thousand, many of whom are of dissipated habits, with constitutions undermined. Out of twenty-nine, sixteen are children; three more have died by accident, and another is a girl. This leaves but nine grown persons, who could possibly be reckoned victims to the climate; and I know that several of them were notoriously loose livers. But it is not for the interest of any

Digitized by Google

one to publish these figures. On the contrary, I believe that some among us concoct a ghastly tale each night, and spread it in the morning. The boers and those who have made money, listen with ears erect in horror, and retail the story dismally. Then, when the alarm has had time to work its full effect, there comes leisurely strolling past the claims, that ingenious gentleman who set a-foot the dreadful news. He shudders in sympathy, and, at length, when flesh and blood can stand no more, he quietly makes a modest bid for the lucky one's property. It is accepted eagerly, or met by a counter proposition. The affrighted man rushes off full speed to scenes where no one lies awake o' nights devising tales of death.

Saw this day a very handsome stone found at Dutoitspan by Mr. S——, a gentleman in the company's employ. He had actually worked eleven months without success. It weighed 19¼ carats, and was almost, if not quite white, without flaw. Went to New Rush, searching for Captain Rolleston, but ignorant of the number of his claim. Though this gentleman is really the discoverer of diamond digging in South Africa, one might as well seek a particular John Smith in the streets of London. I had not before visited the actual diggings of this wondrous kopje. They lie behind the white heaps which tower above the highest of the little houses. We reach their foot, and turn sharply round them to the right. It would need a greater mastery of words than mine to give a just idea of the scene that opens behind that mask of soil thrown up. The ground, which was once a hill, is cut into —whereto shall I compare the labyrinth of pits? Nothing in the whole world, I think, suggests the like. Claims spread out like a fan round the hill top, so much of it as is left—a rock stripped bare. Not an inch of soil has been wasted. The fifteen feet road which law exacts between each line of claims is undermined, and poorly strengthened with trunks and branches of trees. There are twelve such roads. No parapet protects the wandering stranger, or the toiling neophyte. Every day there are accidents, and an

Digitized by Google

accident means death. Holding to one of the posts by which buckets are hauled up and down, you crane your neck over the edge, and look down into the gulf. You draw back in amaze, with an exclamation! There is another world down yonder, sixty feet below! The crowd is almost as great as that around you. Naked blacks, diminished to the size of children, are shovelling, picking, and loading—hundreds of them, in that cool, shadowed, subterranean world. They fill buckets with crumbling earth, and endlessly haul them up and down on pulleys. Some are swarming to the surface on rope ladders. There is an endless cry, and laugh, and ring of metal down below. Buckets rise and fall with the regularity of a machine. On the top they are detached and emptied in a heap, ready for conveyance to the sieve. There are not many claims in the best part of New Rush where sorting can be done at the pit's mouth. The white, dry earth is carted off to the outer edge, and goes to swell the monstrous piles that lie there. Upon the surface—so much as is left of it, which is but the twelve roadways—what a swarm of busy men! They look well to do, and many are quite neat. The reason is, probably, because men have wealth here. Each of them has paid some hundreds, or it may be, thousands, for his right to dig. If he does not work himself, he puts in a trustworthy man upon the system of half profits for his capital. But the working partner must have considerable means, seeing he has all wages and expenses of the blacks to pay. This runs into money at first, but before a week is out he has, perhaps, recouped himself three or four times over. Perhaps, however, he has not.

The proprietors of Dutoitspan and Bultfontein have issued notices that henceforth a charge of 10*s.* per month will be made for each tent upon their farms. In this sum, however, will be included grazing and water fees. The impost appears to be reasonable. Sorting and sifting at a distance from the kopje is a serious injury to the land. The diggers, too, are not invited nor wanted. They have seized the right to dig for diamonds on other

Digitized by Google

people's property, but it would be too absurd to suppose that the right to live rent-free is included. It is to be observed also that thousands are living upon Bultfontein and Alexandersfontein who do not even pay the proprietors a digging fee; for they work at Old de Beers and New Rush, bringing the poisonous sand of those kopjes on to the fertile ground where they choose to pitch their tents. Thus they will not only live rent-free, but will also enjoy the right of spoiling the land they dwell upon. But the proprietors may have difficulty in enforcing this view upon a prejudiced public.

Dec. 6.—Mr. Webb has left for Klipdrift to post some six or seven thousand carats of diamonds—his little customary purchase for the fortnight. Our mail time has again been changed, and Mr. Commissioner Thompson is not here to put a policeman at our service. The American M. was bargaining for a portion of a claim to-day, which the owner valued at £350. M. had just reached the offer of £325, when a five-and-a-half fine stone caught the sorter's eye. He put it in his pocket and accepted the bid. M. says it was a warning he'll never forget. Time is money indeed upon the diamond fields. My Australian Paddy—who has neatly ceiled my room with canvas, and floored it with pounded ants' nests—told me long since that he could find the very claim in which the great Bultfontein diamond of ninety-three carats, and its fellow of thirty-seven carats, were discovered. I told him to look about, for I knew it had not been worked more than seven feet deep. To-day he came to tell me he had found the place, and I went with him to view it. The claim is covered at least fifteen feet deep with a pile of siftings. It lies fifty yards from the road, and as far from the edge of the kopje. Two Kaffirs would have a month's work in clearing it, for the superincumbent stuff must be carried out in buckets; and if neither of them broke his legs or neck in the transport, it would be good luck, so many and so dangerous are the holes. Under these circumstances I gave up the idea of re-opening this Golconda. Every

Digitized by Google

one of the claims that returned such enormous profits at first is in this condition. Bultfontein, and the fragment of Alexandersfontein included in that digging, are more chaotic even than Dutoitspan.

Dec. 7.—Our musical maidservants vanished to Alexandersfontein to-day, and left us to cook. In justice to the residents of Bultfontein house, I am bound to state that we had a better breakfast than I have yet tasted on the fields. When Katrine strolled back, at an uncertain hour of the afternoon, she brought us a pretty chip, about a quarter carat, picked up on the high road. Went to New Rush to see a bit of ground belonging to the great Bantje, perhaps the luckiest digger on the fields. He represented it to me as fifteen feet by five feet, and asked for it £250. Finding the spot, with immense difficulty, it measured only ten feet by five. There is a new proclamation out forbidding canteen keepers to sell drink to negro servants without authority in writing from their masters, under a penalty of £10. This, like the best police rules of the new administration, is but a reprint of the old Committee law. It was much needed. The scenes, at New Rush especially, began to be disgraceful. Saw a diamond, white, and of good shape, sixty-three carats. The finder asked £1,080. I offered him £200. For a beginner this proved to be a good guess, for it ultimately fetched just that sum. Of course it was very badly flawed. One of a hundred and eighty-seven carats was found to-day. A small dinner party at the residence. The English mail is twenty-four hours late, and no news of it as yet.

Dec. 8.—Passed the day in looking at claims in the New Rush. Prices asked are incredible: seven feet by four, £900; thirty feet by seven and a half, £1,500; so downwards to £350 for a quarter claim, nothing below this. I suppose £10,000 would scarcely buy the best claims of this wondrous kopje. English mail came in at midday. Mr. E., a wealthy and cultivated gentleman from the North countree, dined with us. He is a hunter-mad. Having just fallen in for another fortune at home, he

Digitized by Google

proposes to celebrate his luck by an eighteen months' trip amongst the nakedest negroes, elephants, and other wild beasts of the Lake country. One can well understand a month, or two, or six, of that sort of fun; but a year and a half, after seven previous years, does really seem like overdoing a joke. But Mr. E. has plenty to keep him in countenance. The eldest son of one of our wealthiest bankers has been dwelling in a lonely harem some two hundred miles to the northward these five years. An ex-officer of lancers, with many thousands a year, is living as the most trusted warrior of Sechele. Half a score others I could mention, all well-born, rich, and cultivated men, suffering from the like mania.

Dec. 12.—Bought a quarter claim, at New Rush, with two mules, and a "practicable" cart, for £365. Agreed with three fellow-passengers of the *Cambrian* to work the same on the usual system of half profit to the active partners. As the form of agreement may have an interest, I subjoin it:—

"Articles of Agreement made and entered into this 18th day of December, 1871, between Frederick Boyle of Bultfontein, of the one part, and John Smith, William Brown, and James Jones, of the Colesberg Kopje, of the other part. Whereas the said Frederick Boyle is possessed of a certain claim, No. 583, Colesberg Kopje, And whereas the said John Smith, William Brown, and James Jones have jointly and severally agreed to work and dig the same for the said Frederick Boyle, for the space of two calendar months, to be counted from the day on which the said John Smith, William Brown, and James Jones shall commence working and sorting the soil at said claim, No. 583, on the terms and conditions hereinafter mentioned. Now therefore it is witnessed by and between the said parties hereto, that the said John Smith, William Brown, and James Jones shall dig and work the said claim, No. 583, as aforesaid, for the said Frederick Boyle, on the terms and conditions following, viz., That the said John Smith, William Brown, and James Jones shall be entitled to one half share of the profits to be derived from the finds of all precious stones, metals, or minerals therein, the other half to be the property of the said Frederick Boyle. In virtue whereof," &c., &c.

Our postal arrangements get more and more confused. Sending for letters and newspapers to-day, my friend was informed that "nothing was sorted. The Free State has abolished its post-office here, and we are engaged taking stock." Up to this time

Digitized by Google

the English postmaster had used a little building erected by the Free State, which the Commissioners were anxious to purchase at almost any terms. President Brand, however, is not a man of dignity, or of business. He flatly refuses to sell, and orders the shanty to be taken down and removed to Jacobsdaal. Hence a sudden scurry in the office. The great Bantje has exemplified the common ideas of law current amongst boers. He obtained from Captain Rorke an interdict against certain people working a certain claim. I have already mentioned how litigious are the diggers. The case came on to-day, when Bantje was asked what right he had over the claim in question—whether it was his? He said it was not. What legal authority had he over it? It belonged to a friend, and he thought the said friend's partners were not working as judiciously as they might. Asked for his powers to interfere; he hadn't any. Asked if his friend had made any declaration anywhere, constituting him trustee; he was not aware of such a circumstance. Interdict dismissed with costs. Perhaps the best of the joke was, that the persons interdicted—boers, of course — did not complain at all of a frivolous and vexatious interference with their time. As to demanding damages!—such an idea never entered boer head for a mere waste of a week. What's the value of time to a man who sleeps and eats his years away? Bantje told me he wants £1,000 a foot for his many claims. Tremendous thunderstorm in the evening; two persons killed.

Dec. 13.— One of the most ridiculous sights I ever beheld was visible this morning. The heavy rain had cut little channels through the surface of the kopje, filled the holes, and generally disturbed the face of things. A great deal of earth had been washed down towards the dam. When I rose, on a bright and cloudless morning—always, always is it bright and cloudless, always sweltering to greater and more intolerable heat, hour by hour—and stepped outside my chamber door, it was perhaps half-after five. All the space around the house was pawed with

Digitized by Google

monstrous trailings. The mud had not dried. Our maid-servants, the Australian Paddy, our black boys, and the boer assistants of the storekeeper, were crawling about on hands and knees, looking for diamonds in the puddle. The slope of the hill, and the space around the dam below, were black with gigantic caterpillars in human form, who crept, and paddled, and raked the mud about like gutter children after a fire. On the platform round our house I did not hear that any one was successful; but I saw a lovely little gem of three and a half carats picked up by Bultfontein dam. Several others were discovered.

Dec. 14.—Troubled all day, during my correspondence, with a drunken well-sinker from Alexandersfontein. Will you, please, fancy to yourself what it must be to have a drunken well-sinker boring you—disregard the unconscious pun—for six hours at a stretch? No police to remove him, no power to aid. Shall I confess what I did towards four o'clock, when the horrid man flatly refused to leave the portal—flatly refused to cease blowing his alcoholic grievances in my face—flatly refused to let me shut the door? I am not at all ashamed to confess that I offered to fight him, then and there. The notion struck the fellow as worth attention, and we sat down on a bench outside to settle terms. If I finished him off he was to vacate the place instantly; if he finished me, I was to pay him the sum disputed with Mr. Webb out of my own pocket. This being settled, there was nothing to hinder the contest. But my well-sinker looked me over from head to foot, and then put out a dirty paw, laughing ebriously. "Shake hands, sir," he said, "I've had a drop, it's true; but I aren't going to hurt a gentleman as done me no harm. Look'ee here now! This is what I say agin Mr. Webb; he's an honest man, and a reasonable, as everybody knows. He contracted with me——" I insisted on the terms of our compact. Fight or quit was the bargain. He guffawed immensely, but retired at length to the shelter of the stable, where he slept divinely amongst the horses' heels. In the evening, Captain Rolleston came in to

Digitized by Google

propose to us a scheme by which Colesberg kopje, or New Rush, might be worked out with a tramway. The affair looks promising; but I greatly doubt whether the consent of the diggers could be got.

Dec. 16.—The Transvaal Republic is very mad with Pretorius. He is to be impeached for suffering Governor Keate to arbitrate upon the claims of the Republic. Sat at home all day, and looked after stray cattle. Seventeen oxen, three mules, and two horses came to me. Sent them to the pound at Alexandersfontein.

Dec. 17.—Captain Rolleston came up and dined with us. Mentioned, in course of conversation, that the diggers of New Rush intended to try a canteen keeper for buying diamonds of a negro. So many alarming reports are always current, that we paid no attention to this warning. The tramway scheme mentioned again. I advised that one road be selected—that on which Captain Rolleston had most influence—to try whether the diggers would consent. A colonial man brought me a hedgehog for sale, precisely similar to our English species. He wanted £1 for this astonishing curiosity. Was greatly surprised to learn, that in a certain district of London, called the Seven Dials, any amount of them might be bought at a shilling apiece.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW RUSH RIOTS.

Important legal question at issue between well-sinkers and proprietors—Rumours of disturbance at New Rush—Confirmation—The Hottentot's confession—Trial and sentence of Ascher unheard—Execution—The mob get the upper hand—Stoppage of a bridal party in Main Street—Threatening attitude of the rioters towards the landowners—Sack and pillage proposed—Mr. Gilfillan comes on the scene—His harangue—Another tent burnt—Fickleness of the crowd—The innocent owner reimbursed quadruply—A march on Dutoitspan proclaimed—Mr. Gilfillan stops the rioters—A groundswell of disorder next day—Threats sent to Dutoitspan traders—Mr. Kelsey, the agitator, receives warning that his store will be burnt—Swearing in special constables—Quiet restored—Reflections on this dangerous outbreak.

DEC. 17th.—This is a day memorable in the history of the diggings. For the first time the angry discontent prevailing has been roused into acts that resemble Lynch-law. Mob justice had been threatened several times, but nothing had yet resulted. I confess that the patience of the diggers equally surprised and gratified me. Though, as an impartial person, I cannot think that their grievances are reasonable, they are not the less real to those interested, nor less irritating. That men, having the entire force of the diggings in their favour, and bitterly disappointed with Government, should so long have endured without attempting to dispense with law, is a subject for just pride.

In the course of the morning I mastered a blue-book or two, then strolled into the Pan. Mr. Webb is engaged in prosecuting a considerable number of persons who have been digging wells, instead of seeking diamonds, in their claim. It is angrily argued

Digitized by Google

on their behalf, that a man may do what he pleases with the thirty feet of ground he pays the fee for. Mr. Webb replies that the license is specific, granted for the sole purpose of diamond digging. Upon this question issue was joined this morning. Mr. Gilfillan declines to settle it, and the case must go to Klipdrift. How many offenders there may be, is not yet certainly known. Mr. Webb is proceeding against seventeen, and injunctions *ad interim* were granted this morning against all these. Receivers are posted over the wells.*

About two P.M. rumours came down of disturbances at New Rush. I tried to get a cart, but earlier information had drawn every one to the riot. The warning given us by yesterday's guest came into my mind, but I thought little of it, so many agitating rumours have we heard. I retired to Bultfontein, whither, about four o'clock, several friends came cantering over with the news. It seems that a certain Ascher, reputed to be a man of damaged repute, had for some time been suspected of buying diamonds from black servants. On Saturday, a specific charge was made against him, on the confession of a Hottentot. There really appears to be little doubt of his guilt. On Sunday, notices were sent round by some of the wealthiest and most respectable of the New Rush diggers, inviting a select few to meet at eleven A.M. this morning. About fifty attended; in fact, I believe there was only one absent of those invited. The Hottentot was produced by his master, and repeated his confession. After hearing it, but one verdict could be given. Some few suggested legal prosecution, but this course met with no approval. Marching from the council tent in a body, the self-appointed ministers of justice went towards Ascher's canteen. Their purpose was widely known, and every digger in camp approved. By the time they reached their destination, there were not less than two thousand resolute men behind them. Nothing was said to Ascher beyond a few stern words. The leaders, I believe, had no intention of hurting him, but it appears that he was

* The case was finally decided, four months after, in favour of Mr. Webb.

Digitized by Google

struck with an empty bottle, knocked down, and seriously hurt. His servants, too, suffered badly. Thereafter the place was sacked, the liquor started, every article of sale or furniture destroyed, and the canvas set blazing over the ruin. The leaders then would fain have had the crowd disperse; but this proved impossible. Carrying their reluctant instigators along, they went to canteen after canteen, holding before the door of each a trial, which would have seemed excellent burlesque, had it not been so cruelly serious. Five were condemned, and burnt down one after another. In the midst of the tumult, a boer who had just been married drove down Main Street, where the rioters were thronging at that moment, with his bride and bridesmaids. The *cortège* was stopped, half-a-dozen big fellows clambered up and kissed the bride, and tickled the bridesmaids, to the roaring delight of those below.

This sport exhausted, it came under earnest debate whether to burn the proprietors' tents—those luckless proprietors!—or to sack the stalls of the koopers. Little groups of the dangerous class gathered round each diamond-buyer's tent, loudly threatening, and waiting only for one spark of encouragement. Mr. Perkins, the representative of the New Rush proprietors, was, I am told, in actual fear of his life; and a dozen wealthy diamond merchants have assured me that they expected a general sack from moment to moment.

But whilst the crowd was hesitating, their leaders trying to disperse them, Mr. Gilfillan, the resident magistrate of Dutoitspan, *pro tem.*, came up. He was loudly cheered by the rioters, who knew they had nothing to fear. It was a difficult, and, indeed, a dangerous position for any one to occupy. Mr. Gilfillan had no armed force to rely on; his police numbered about one to five hundred rioters, nor were they either disciplined or contented. But it was carrying too far the conciliation policy to declare, as did our Dutoitspan magistrate, that the diggers had done nothing amiss; that he himself had been a digger, and knew and shared their feelings. "I am a digger myself," cried

Digitized by Google

this gentleman, from the eminence of a cart, "and I understand you." But whilst excusing their illegal acts, Mr. Gilfillan quietly suggested that enough had been done. He begged the mob to go home without further outrage. They cheered him, and passed up the street to burn an empty tent, with a few bottles in it, which some malevolent wretch denounced. When the act had been committed, it dawned upon the minds of some present that their proceedings were rather hasty. A shout arose for the accusing witness. He tried to conceal himself, but was discovered and pushed to the front. They say that the man's appearance instantly convinced all present that he had lied. It was earnestly debated whether or not to throw him amongst the glowing cinders, during which time he contrived to slip away, under protection of the chief rioters. A subscription, raised upon the spot, doubly or trebly reimbursed the tent-owner for his loss.

Then, not warned by this awkward mistake, shouts arose for an advance on Dutoitspan, to carry out Lynch-law there. Mr. Gilfillan, who had taken refuge in a canteen, now made himself useful. He induced the drivers of the carts to turn their horses round, and refuse to go. Thereupon, as it was growing dark, the rioters dispersed to the pleasant diversion of chasing negroes round about, aimlessly punching their heads when caught. Not a policeman showed himself all through the time. He would have run no risk, for all knew him to be powerless, and well affected towards the malcontents. But the Free State party rejoices, saying that such disorders were unknown under Truter's rule.

Dec. 18*th*.—This has been a day of alarm to many, and anxiety to all, at Dutoitspan. A certain portion of the late rioters held a meeting in the forenoon, at which various storekeepers here were denounced as having sold diamonds to negroes. It was resolved to pay the accused a visit to-night; for the hours sacred to digging could not be encroached upon even for sacred vengeance. The threatened parties waited on Mr. Gilfillan, and begged

Digitized by Google

advice. I visited New Rush in the afternoon, but all seemed quiet. On my return there was a definite and well-formed rumour abroad. Mr. Kelsey, the "diggers' friend" and land-owners' enemy, chairman of incendiary committees, and general agitator against common sense and justice; he who has led each crusade against proprietory rights; whom I myself have heard in the market square, perched on the market tables, deliver a vehement harangue against all authority but digger force—even he himself had been tried in his absence and convicted. Sentenced he was, without appeal, to have his house and store burned down. A formal notice to that effect was sent to him from New Rush. In pitiable terror he appealed for police aid. Mr. Gilfillan promised assistance, and straightway began to press in the passers-by as special constables. Mr. Fry was amongst those first caught, and very droll was his indignation at the thought of defending, above all men on earth, Mr. Kelsey. But we were all interested in this case, for the post-office chances to be under the doomed roof just at present. Great excitement reigned when the news became disseminated. Diamond holders thoughtfully cogitated as to the best hiding-place for their store. The canteen keepers generally showed more stoicism, prepared for the worst. News from "The Mountain," as one might call New Rush, in old revolutionary phrase, had a crowd of eager listeners throughout the day.

I scarcely doubt that there was a scheme abroad for making mischief at Dutoitspan, but I feel quite sure the chief men of New Rush had no part in it. The project was hatched by the few persons of criminal antecedents who hung about the fields. We sat till a late hour, but no red glare lit up the sky. All was in readiness at Bultfontein House for an immediate sortie to the spot attacked, but no need rose. In fact, the seething camp beneath us never had been so still. Till midnight, there is in general a surge of life about it, a noise of laughter, shouting, and rude music, which re-echoes upwards to us, standing upon the

Digitized by Google

piles of stuff around our sacred area. There is, too, a flicker of lights between tent and tent; the Kaffir cry swells up our hill; and tipsy songs ring out from time to time with astounding distinctness. But this night was very silent; something like expectancy hung in the very air. I have little doubt that any strange mob would have been warmly met; for there is little love lost betwixt gay New Rush and the toiling Pan.

In the first place, however, there were two miles and a half of barren veldt between the lawless rioters there and this peaceful camp—a long night march; then, at the head of the movement, was a body of respectable and substantial men, who might be irritated by the thought of wrongs into violence, but have already learned caution. Thanks to these causes, the ill-disposed have been disheartened, and Mr. Kelsey—all of us, perhaps—have escaped considerable danger. Things were wholly quiet throughout the night, nor do we fear a recurrence of the disorders at present; but when they may be renewed, upon fresh cause given or suspected, no one can predict. There is an ominous talk of the Ballarat riots, which may keep mischief alive. That bad characters are greatly on the increase any storekeeper will prove to you at his cost. One firm here, which was accustomed, under the Free State, to leave half its stock-in-trade beside the street all night, and never lost the value of a penny, suffered two attempts at burglary last week, besides the theft of a couple of wine-casks: other and more successful efforts of house-breaking are reported. The police are never to be seen, save in a canteen, drinking. It may not be their fault that they never seem to go on duty, or to have any beat by day or night; but, with shame be it confessed, the acts of our Commissioners, when forced beyond the tether of Sir H. Barkly's masterly proclamation, have been feeble. They have remedied no evil that caused complaint under the *régime* of the Free State; they have allowed to be introduced drunkenness and disorder among the negroes, burglary, highway robbery, and rioting amongst the diggers. These are strong words; but

Digitized by Google

when I say that nine people in ten are inclined to regret, or openly anathematize, the British annexation, I shall be held excused by all loyal subjects for the expression. The riots just over would not have been possible under Free State rule. The authority of Mr. Truter was too absolute, resting, as it did, on digger prejudices, and his punishments too swift and stern to allow the cause of them; his police too, scarecrows as they were, patrolled the streets, or, if they did not, their vigilance was not missed. Our guardians are drafted from that fine body of men, the Frontier Mounted Police; they avow their detestation of municipal service, for which they did not enlist. The authorities are aware of the illegality, and their officers share the general indignation. I believe the men to be brave and well disciplined, picked soldiers, in fact; but not of such can be made good police-men, even if willing, which our constables certainly are not. The English have brought hither a great parade of forms—the High Commissioners and their High Court are mighty adornments; but we poor residents, whether diggers, koopers, or spectators, would rather have some reasonable guarantee for the good behaviour of the ill-disposed than any forms or precedents.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

HOPETOWN.

Start for Hopetown—Scenery—Komering's dam—The Mod River—Jacobsdaal—Most miserable hospitality—The Riet River—Salt-pans—Belmont—Cordial hosts—Mr. Wayland's farms and stock—Agriculture *versus* pasture in South Africa—The Orange River—Hopetown, its aspect, population, and trade—Feathers and karosses, their value—The boer trade—Mr. David Arnot: his history, his house, his hopes, and his hospitality—A visit to the leper hospital at Hopetown—Disgraceful niggardliness of the authorities—An awful scene—The course of the disease, its nature, and its cure.

Dec. 22, 1871.

AT five P.M. I started with Mr. Webb for Hopetown, I with the resolve to see the junction of the Vaal and Orange Rivers; he to seek for health beyond the dust and flies and torment of the camp. We drove past Alexandersfontein, over long wastes, peopled with springbok and Kaffir cranes, and dainty little active meercats. At some distance on our left, through several miles, lay the green hollow, which is a lake in rainier seasons; its water is brack, of course, and fed only by the drainage of the land. Cattle will neither feed nor drink upon its banks; but a harvest of grass had made the marshy bed most grateful to our sight. After an hour-and-a-half reached Komering's dam, a spot I came to know particularly well hereafter. Mr. Komering is a boer, rich in herds and flocks, in money too, they say; he dwells in a house not too uncomfortable, and has a garden heaped with fruit. The diamond fields have been to this man fortune, but he persistently declines to know them; he says there is a spot upon his farm where the gems lie thick as pebbles, but no *verdomt* digger

Digitized by Google

shall come near. It's well for this gentleman that nobody believes his tale, or things might go badly with his head and limbs. Inspanning, we pushed for the Mod River, which flows and stagnates at the bottom of deep mud cliffs, well-wooded with tall trees, and full of blossom; the water did not reach a third part up our wheel, and I laughed to hear the dirty brooklet called a river. In days not far off it was given me to see these lofty banks abrim with roaring currents, the tall trees washed away or smothered, and a hundred waggons camped on either side in patient waiting for the ebb.

After a dangerous ride, in pitchy darkness, over stones and sloots, grazing now an anthill, and now within an inch of overturn amidst a thicket, we drove into Jacobsdaal, a town of a hundred and fifty souls, perhaps one of the most rising settlements of the Free State, a resort of scoundrels flying from English justice, but also a busy and active little place. Mr. Webb and I had a strong wish to put up at the inn; but the hospitable spirit of a lady, who with her husband had been entertained at Bultfontein, would not endure denial. Unwillingly we entered a most dreary room, broad, high, unceilinged, lighted only with a single dip. With that air so well becoming to the host who puts his choicest fare before the man he loves to honour, the excellent woman gave us all the dip, a cup of milk apiece, a little loaf of bread, and some salt butter. Dismayed by these elaborate preparations for festivity, again we tried to flee towards the hotel—uselessly. Dispensing milk in a dark corner, our hostess resolutely warned us to be happy, and dismiss the offensive notion. I was hungry as a traveller should be; but Webb had only a sick man's dainty appetite. We ate all the bread, all a pot of jam, reluctantly produced, and drank the jug of milk; thereinafter, we were shown a cupboard furnished with fleas, where both of us lay down till morning. A frightful dyspepsia, caused by hunger and milk, gave me such a prejudice against Jacobsdaal and the Jacobsdaalians, that I shall not trust myself at present to describe the settlement.

Digitized by Google

In justice to our entertainer, I should observe that meat is nearly twopence a pound for the primest cuts, and also that she keeps the largest store in the place.

23rd.—Shaking the dust from our feet, we crossed the Riet River, about fifteen minutes on the further side of Jacobsdaal. This stream flowed between shallower banks, but had no more water than the Mod. The country changes its appearance here, and for the better. Broad tracts of grass, springing from a deep red soil, give it at least an air of fertility. Outspanned at noon by great salt-pans, which supply all the country side. The land here is peculiarly brack, and gives out its mineral salts in great quantity under rains. As the flood subsides, these substances are deposited in snowy layers upon the ground, and hither come the boers to collect their store. There are many salt-pans up and down, but none so large or so convenient as these. I should think the space coated and covered with the crystals, which look like snow upon the ground, is not less than three miles by half a mile. The salt, being mixed with other minerals, has a curious flavour, not unpleasant to any taste, but very much affected by those who are used to it. The boers declare our salt to have no taste at all, as they say also of pure water, being used either to drink it muddy or brack. Reached Mr. Wayland's farm of Belmont at four P.M.

I shall find an opportunity to describe this charming place, a real oasis in the veldt. When we arrived, the Christmas visitors were driving up, party after party. Where the ladies were all stowed I cannot guess; but the exact locality of the babies' residence was easy to identify. Gentlemen, of course, slept anywhere; but a comfortable bed was found for Mr. Webb. At supper-time we sat down five-and-twenty at a substantial board, the strength of which was fairly tried by a South African abundance of dishes. Never were hosts more genial, easy, and unaffected in their hospitality. I believe that if fifty strangers had walked in they would have been but the more delighted.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Wayland is one of those settlers who tracked up hither at the invitation of Waterboer, the Griqua chief. In 1867 was published a resolution of the Raad, or council of the Griqua nation, opening a large portion of his dominions to colonists of European extraction, who were entitled to take certain farms on an improving lease. The district set aside for their occupation was called Albania. The Free State subsequently arrogated authority over it, and re-surveyed the farms, cutting or enlarging them at will. Mr. Wayland, an enthusiastic partisan of Waterboer, suffered severely, nor were insults wanting to increase the pain of confiscation. He claims seven farms in Albania, each about six thousand acres. Of these the Free State Land Commission took away four—the most valuable, of course. Two of the remainder are partly used by squatters, boers, who graze sheep upon them. There are also a considerable number of Griqua squatters. The land under cereals is not worth mentioning; but Mr. Wayland is engaged on irrigation works, which will greatly enlarge his arable land. At present sheep alone engage his attention. Of them, with the necessary number of goats, he has about 3,000; of cattle, 100 head; and horses, 20. The native squatters graze 1,800 sheep or more, 150 cattle, and 50 horses. The two boers may have 2,000 sheep and 60 head of cattle and horses. Besides the seven farms in Albiana, which lie in a block,* Mr. Wayland owns 20,000 acres or so of diamondiferous land upon the Vaal River, in freehold, to the westward, and adjoining the territory leased to the London and South African Exploration Company. He has likewise a valuable property at Backhouse, near the Hook, which might easily be irrigated from the Vaal River.

I have heard it argued several times that sheep paid as well as cereals in this country, if not better. Consulting Mr. Wayland on this point, he gave me an opinion very different. As a rough basis of calculation, it is universally held that two acres here will

* By one of the earliest decisions of the English Land Commission, the four farms subtracted have been restored to him.

Digitized by Google

support one sheep. At present prices, year-old lambs will give a fleece worth 1*s.* 6*d.* Grown sheep bring 4*s.* a year. The carcass is worth 10*s.* on an average. Fifteen shillings is the utmost return to be calculated per *morgen.* But where the land can be irrigated, not less than twenty to thirty *muids* of corn will be grown upon the acre, selling at a price to give £1 profit per *muid.* With forage at its present rate, oats promise equally well. We are here in the immediate neighbourhood of the diamond-fields, and cereals have vastly increased in price; but in the worst of times corn would pay sixfold better than sheep. There is, however, so little ground on which it can be planted. Capital and irrigation works are needed, above all things, here.

24th (Christmas Eve).—More visitors were expected in this most hospitable of farm-houses; but we were pressed to stay with genuine warmth. Getting off at six A.M., we reached the noble Orange River about four hours later, passing a grassy plain, flecked with heads of sheep and springbok. Almost from the outset of our drive the powder magazine of Hopetown was in view, a snow-white turret set on high above the village. The banks of the river are lofty, though formed but of mud. Tall willow trees fringe the current, and a billowy thicket of bushes stands behind. No boats nor canoes enliven this silent river. From its far source, amongst the mountains of the Drakenburg, to the unpeopled bay of waste Namaqualand, where it pours into the Atlantic, not a paddle clanks upon it, not a village shades its water. These Africans know not the use of streams. At Hopetown there are two ponts, or ferry-boats, and down below, at the junction whither I am going, there is another. Besides these, and the row-boats that belong to them, no craft is found upon all the stream.

Rousing the pont-men with difficulty, we drove upon their deck, and swept across. The current is astonishingly swift, and only by tacking some two hundred yards along the hither bank could the farther *drift* or road be struck. Landed, we drove along

Digitized by Google

a sterile path, much cut with sloots, to Hopetown. The environs of the village on this side are occupied by Hottentots and loafing Kaffirs, a large proportion of them women, who keep up a rolling interchange of filthy language. Fortunately, their huts are built some distance from the road, upon a grey hillside. They occasionally weary of their own obscene replies, however, and seek new fancies from the passer-by. Past this suburb, one drives along the cemetery wall, overhung with cypresses and dark-hued shrubs; one turns the corner by a gaol, and the white church of Hopetown enters on the view, blocking the end of a pretty avenue. Trees and flowers are everywhere, and very grateful do they seem to one returning from the naked veldt. The houses, whitewashed, painted, neatly glazed, and shadowed by foliage, appear to such an one a very dream of comfort. There are not many of them, and but one—of course the parson's—can boast of an upper floor. But they are clean and cool and shady. Ladies may be seen in them. Real cooks abide in their holy place. Flowers stand in the windows, and the jingle of a piano jumps through the open sash. This, the most offensive of all sounds, seems home-like after long silence.

Hopetown is believed to contain nearly two hundred white people, and twice as many blacks. The number of houses would hold a larger population; but some of them are occupied only from time to time, when the farmer takes the fancy for a spell of city life. But, scanty though the census be, and simple the mode of living, the average of wealth here would surprise a stranger. From this place start the majority of inland traders. Here they lay out their thousands of pounds in hardware, cottons, beads, and other fancies to ensnare the "guileless Ethiopian." Hither too they bring the Ethiopian's spoil when they've ensnared him; the loads of hard-earned ivory, the monstrous packs of plumes, the skins, and horns, and nameless valuables of a barbarian commerce. All of these, in any quantity, the Hopetown merchant purchases, driving a quick and careless bargain, sure to make

Digitized by Google

money in the end, though he buy hastily to-day. The amounts of produce arriving here would seem incredible. The sales of Messrs. Lilienfeld Brothers in Port Elizabeth, which are principally furnished from that branch of the firm which trades in this town, often reach 10,000 lbs. weight of ostrich feathers, never are less than 5,000 lbs. weight, each fortnight. At an average of a hundred feathers to the pound, this would make one million for the fortnightly sale of a single house. Nor is my worthy friend Mr. L. Lilienfeld without a dangerous rival in his trade at Hopetown. Feathers are always an expensive article to purchase in South Africa, such, that is, as are useful for adornment. Fine plumes average from seventy to ninety to the pound, and the price of such is steady at £40, often going beyond this figure. A single feather of the sort would be difficult to buy, but a friendly merchant will sometimes take the first that comes at the price of £1, or will let you pick at 25*s.* or 30*s.* I am speaking of plumes which measure fifteen to twenty inches across. The largest I ever saw was of the latter width, but Mr. Palgrave, a great inland traveller—one of those who never wrote a book—tells me he has had them of *twenty-four inches*, from the eastern district. I was most unreasonably gratified to hear from this gentleman, whose authority none impeach even in whispers, that elephants may still be found in countless droves along that part. Five thousand at a time has he beheld—but this by the way. From the rate of £40 per lb., feathers range down to £2 10*s.* and £3, these latter technically known as dusters. Plumes of the domesticated ostrich, if of the first quality, fall twenty per cent. behind those from the interior. The stalk is not so good, nor so strong. But it is very rare to find tame "bloods"—as these first feathers are called—that will bear comparison with the wild.

Skins and karosses the merchant buys unwillingly. They yield a very small profit, are bulky, and not easily protected. It is a fact that South African furs can be bought more cheaply in London than on the spot, though I cannot tell why. An amateur

Digitized by Google

in skins, I hoped to find some treasures over yonder, but the price was monstrous. The diamond-fields have now intercepted this trade, to the great relief of Messrs. Lilienfeld, who informed me with delight, they had not one kaross in all their stores. It will easily be believed that the traders themselves are not anxious to encumber their waggons with such heavy and unprofitable goods, but the necessities of their wild commerce oblige them to accept a peltry here and there; otter-skins, however, are greedily purchased. Colonists, Kaffirs, and Negroes put an extravagant value on this fur; £20 a man asked me for a badly-matched kaross of otter in Dutoitspan, and he easily got his money. I bought three very indifferent skins at 10*s.* apiece, and they have turned out, on dressing, to be much superior to ordinary seal. It is not with such hopes, however, that they are prized in the colony.

Besides this lucrative trade with the interior, there are numberless pedlars who load up a stock of goods in Hopetown for barter with the farmers—boer of course. They fit themselves out in a store, taking one or two or more waggons with them. The goods thus obtained they barter for sheep, cattle, hides, or any other valuable whatsoever, the which, when all the goods are sold, they carry back to Hopetown, when the storekeeper takes them in exchange for a larger load of goods, if the venture have been successful; thus holding an endless chain of profit, both buying and selling at his own price, the merchant should be happy. The pedlars, however, make large profits, if shrewd and daring. Nearly all successful traders of the colony started in this way.

It is not a new thing for me to malign the sun of Christmas Eve. I have sweltered through the day beneath a shade of Nubian palms, watching the *ghowazee* who whirled and fainted in the open. I have passed it, moistly, by a galley fire, when the glass ranged to 120° in the still Indian sea. I have larded the earth of Mexico, and frolicked through the heavy night in muslin drawers and shirt of cambric. And I remember, too, a Christmas Eve in which we lay riven and tempest-tossed, with anchors bow and stern, a

Digitized by Google

hurricane to windward, and the grey crags of wild Sardinia a narrow mile away upon the lee. But nowhere could greater heat be felt than in South Africa at this season. Dutoitspan probably is even hotter than Hopetown; but here, in the roomy house of Mr. Lilienfeld, all the shutters closed, and twilight reigning, the heat of Egypt burned us up. There were no flies, however, no fleas, and abundance of cool water. Sincerely did I pity those poor fellows we had left, shut up in reeking tents, or jostled by a noisy, drunken crowd. Here is no unseemly merriment. Once in the hour a negro passes. The townspeople, ladies and gentlemen, troop by to church. Evening comes on, and all the population draws out chairs upon the stoop, and sits there to exchange a nod and friendly smile with vagrant spirits passing by. It is a blessed calm.

Christmas Day.—Hospitality at this season is as universal here as in the imaginary England of Mr. Dickens. A local celebrity —whose name, however, is well known at our Foreign Office, and to the readers of Blue Books—Mr. David Arnot, to wit—is entertaining a large party in his house of Eskdale, and it appears that I also am invited. Mr. Lilienfeld has not a clerk remaining. All flocked to this gathering yesterday, nor mean returning for an indefinite time. From what I hear, Mr. Arnot must have a soul —and a house—as large as even Mr. Wayland's.

A hurricane was blowing as I took my seat with Mr. Lilienfeld behind those superb grey stallions which are the pride and envy of the countryside. When the wind is high, there is very great difficulty, and some danger, in getting the pont across so broad and swift a river as the Orange. It seemed doubtful whether the ferryman would allow it to be risked, but Mr. Lilienfeld's influence prevailed, and we crossed. An hour's drive from the further bank, through a scanty grass land, bearing many large, smooth rocks, scattered about like pebbles; round bare, lonely hills, the haunt of fierce baboons; through bounding herds of springbok, we went towards Eskdale. I had no need to inquire

Digitized by Google

what manner of man our host would be; but the reader is probably unversed in Cape politics.

Mr. David Arnot is one of those gentlemen who, in a larger or smaller sphere, make history. To understand in any sense at all the questions disputed between our Colonial Office and the Free State, it is necessary to understand the history, position, and the doings of Mr. David Arnot. He is the man behind the curtain who pulls the strings, the confidential agent, the very brain and hand of Waterboer is he. For seventeen years he has conducted the business of the Griqua chief; and he might boast—only he never does—that in all those seventeen years of dangerous and difficult negotiation, he has not made one mistake. A diplomatist born, thoughtful, tenacious, of unfailing memory, expedient inexhaustible, courage undaunted, he has ever kept before his eyes one final object—to persuade the English Government to accept these territories. In pursuit of his desire, he has struggled seventeen years against the brute power and insolence of the boers. Much and violent as is the hatred borne by the independent republics towards their leading antagonists, it is not, all together, equal to their savage enmity against Arnot. On every point he has outwitted them, and their every act he has turned to his client's profit. Whether in the pen-and-ink warfare of despatches, or in mouth-to-mouth conference, or in over-handed violence, he has stung and triumphed. Waterboer of the Griquas is an easy, helpless fellow, very good-hearted, very polite, and very childish. Monkoran, of the Corannas, is little better, I understand, than a stupid savage. Without their counsellor these two chieftains must have been swallowed up without resistance, one by the Free State, the other by the Transvaal. But Mr. Arnot, who has not a man behind him, nor a weapon in his possession, has kept back the greedy and unscrupulous plunderers by the mere power of intellect. Nowhere could be found a stronger instance of the force that dwells in brain to daunt and conquer simple violence.

Digitized by Google

This singular gentleman is in appearance vastly like our friend Mr. J. L. Toole. Very short, very thick, with a large face clean-shaven, and a dark skin burnt darker by South African suns, he has yet that humorous twinkle of the eye, and quaint mobility of the lips, that mark our great comedian. I wonder whether, under other circumstances, Mr. Toole would have come out strong in the diplomatic line! Mr. Arnot's accomplishments, however, are not bounded by his profession. He is a skilful musician, an indefatigable student of several sciences. For many years he has been an active correspondent of Dr. Hooker, and the Gardens at Kew owe to him some of their most curious specimens. In return, he has been furnished with various seeds and plants which he is trying to acclimatize at Eskdale. His house, nevertheless, is situate on the most desolate and hopeless spot even of the desolations I have seen in Griqualand. The principle on which a locality is selected for building in this extraordinary country, is still to me the most mysterious of problems. Just where you would *not* expect the house to stand, there in most instances it is. Mr. Arnot has erected his comfortable dwelling in a spot where the Mosque of Omar itself would look like a cotton factory. There are hills all round it, lapping over one another, and so furrowed with dells and valleys, that the name of Eskdale seems at a distance quite appropriate. But, drawing nearer, over oh such a road! one perceives that the force of bitter sarcasm could go no further, than to gibbet such a scene with such a name. The hills have not one leaf or blade of green upon them; the valleys not a drop of water. Red volcanic pebbles cover all the surface of the land, everywhere, on slope, and terrace, and in riven dell. The pale, burnt soil is not to be seen for stones. Here and there a hardy aloe thrusts its brown flower-spike from out the heap. A little bush, bearing a twisted crop of thorns and half a score of pallid leaves, struggles for life upon the lower ground. By dry ravines, the which, all arid now, may be in some few moments flush abrim with raging water, spring small clumps of feathery

Digitized by Google

Cape cotton. But these bits and fragments of pale verdure are washed out by the prevailing reds and browns and greys. The sun beats up and down and all across, reflected from hill to hill and stone to stone. In the centre of this oven, on a long slope gravelled with pebbles, stands the bare, bleak house. Four small peach-trees shiver, not with cold but dreariness, before it. There is no fence, no drive, nor plant, nor grass, nor ornament. All alone and naked does it stand, like a toy house on a cinder-heap. Behind, some hundred yards below, but almost hidden from the sight, the garden lies, rich in fig and peach and melon, bound with a hedge of prickly pear, and compassing about a little pond that rarely dries, upon the banks of which the politician grows his flowers. At back of the house, up a flight of steps, of unburnt brick, all broken and precipitous, one passes to the study, where Mr. Arnot must have held so often dreary council with himself. Its uses now are pleasant as may be, for every scheme he has so subtly woven there has prospered, to his own great advantage. The gratitude, so well deserved, of Waterboer and Monkoran has made of him the largest landowner in the world. And Mr. Arnot will not idly contemplate his boundless acres, as did those who formerly owned them. He has, I believe, large schemes in view for turning to account the land so long held uselessly and profitless. And, be his projects what they may, none who have enjoyed the kindly welcome that awaits the traveller at Eskdale would do otherwise than join in wishing to its owner all success.

We were received with that simple, genuine welcome of which these colonists so well understand the secret. The place, of course, was crowded, and such a show of beauty revealed itself, we were not surprised at the enthusiasm of young Hopetown. After a pleasant talk, half serious, half gossiping, upon the prospects and the retrospect of the territory—in which I became convinced of Mr. Arnot's great ability—the elder members of the party sat down to an excellent dinner. I had a place next to our host's son-in-law, who asked me, before ten words had been exchanged,

Digitized by Google

whether I had been at Oxford: There is a something in most of us which reveals to the initiated a brother of the Isis, like a free-mason's signal. Confessing a former residence within the walls of Brazenose, I found my neighbour to be Magdalen. Very gay and pleasant was the meal; and when we drove off, Mr. Lilienfeld, myself, and one poor clerk whom he had seized by force of arms, I could honestly declare it was with reluctance I debarred myself the pleasures of the dance about to be arranged. Springbok were in hundreds on our homeward route, and meercats scuttled from the path in coveys.

It was during this visit to Hopetown that Dr. Muskett, the medical officer of the district, took me to see the lepers. We drove out in Mr. Lilienfeld's cart, with the celebrated grey stallions, and the magnificent John. That personage evidently regarded us with contempt, as poor folks owning neither stallions nor Johns; he looked on his "boss," however, with scorn deeper still, for that he *did* own those most celebrated stallions and that most magnificent John, being of such blessings unworthy. Dr. Muskett follows a prudent rule in keeping no carriage nor horses. The village of Hopetown scarcely stretches one's legs to traverse, but the district is immense. To town patients he can walk, but those extramural must needs send a cart for their medical adviser, since he refuses to have one of his own. What innocent depths of knowingness one sounds in country places! Sir Henry Bulwer's self could not have made a shrewder calculation.

We drove a very short distance to the right of the village. Lying in a hollow, between two swells, Hopetown is lost to sight within a few score yards, except the powder tower on the hill. Taking a by-path from the southern road, we crossed a series of barren slopes, very smooth and extremely steep, divided from one another by rain-sloots, which rapidly deepened as one traced them towards the lower land. When I call these slopes barren, I speak in language to be understood of Englishmen. They are covered with thin, hard, grey grass, from which all goodness seems

Digitized by Google

burnt out. I wish to put this landscape well before you. There are no bushes anywhere. A creeping *cassia* only spreads its trefoil leaves and golden tendrils on the ground. Slope beyond slope, on three sides the picture, one's gaze ascends to a near horizon, grey, though quivering in the heat. Down below, across a network of gullies and arid water-ways, appears the river-land, aglow with yellow sheets of blossom, broken with bush and tree, mottled with all tones of dusky red and green and dun. Beyond, the rapid stream swells past, between its borders of tall willow, and high mud banks. The Albanian shore is all a waste of pallid herbage, and red hill, and purple distant mountain. No shade falls on the slope from year to year, except the passing flitter of a vulture's wing. Naked, the summer heats beat on it with still fury that might split the very stones; shelterless, the wild winds whistle over it in winter time, icy with river damps, fierce with the desert's liberty. Here, on the widest slope, exposed to every blast, and burnt with each blazing ray from dawn to sunset, a few round hives of wicker stand. *There* is the hospital, and there its wards! They may be six feet diameter, and close upon the same height in the centre. The ragged gaps in their frame of willow are protected with a fragment of a rotten box; sometimes a sheet of tin, brave and glistening in the sun, is nailed across the break. Over all, to keep out winter's cold and the more pitiless heat, a few old filthy skins, so worn, so ragged, and so hairless, Cuvier's self could not identify the animal that bore them, are tossed on any way, and pegged down as they drop. But not half the roof is covered. The shadow of some of these wards falls on the ground like that of an aviary. Through the rotten framework, and the weather-worn hides, one can see those sun-scorched terraces, and the thin, grey herbage. Count and you will find ten of these lairs.

There are people moving about the space. Some have a slow and listless tread, but others go from hive to hive with active gait. And there are children, half-a-score at least, playing and

Digitized by Google

leaping on the slope. John does not hesitate to drive into the middle of the "hospital." Neither he nor any Africander fears infection. We alight, and those individuals whom we had seen walking from place to place come up. The children also cease their games, and form a watchful group. The men are friends and visitors, the little ones—lepers appointed from their birth! The two eldest have already felt the dreadful warning. At the doctor's request, a boy of twelve or so stretches out a hand cramped and thickened. He replies to my questions in a husky, wearied voice—the voice of the leper. A girl somewhat older, lounging by the entrance of a den—there is no door—has received the fatal sign more palpably. Her swollen face, and the hoarse murmur of her lips, tell the predestined story. But neither of these children were yet crippled. Only a sentence over them. The boy, in fact, was progressing most favourably towards a cure, temporary indeed, and hopeless as the direst symptom, but likely to prevail for eighteen months or so. Is not that something to gain in a doomed existence? The girl had not fallen under Dr. Muskett's charge when this hour of respite sounded for her. The other children, though wild and dirty, had limbs like deer, and eyes as bright as stars. The boys were naked, little, upright, sturdy fellows, as beautiful in form as any marble child of Phidias. Not a speck or scar on their lithe, brown bodies. But the fate was over them, every one.

We went past to the dens, attended by busy gossips. Shall I tell what I saw there? It would be a shocking tale. In those ten loathely dwellings there was not a man or woman possessing all his limbs. Perhaps an anatomist might have built the skeletons of six whole people from their bones. And such mutilation was it! Joints not amputated, but rotted off, and in course of rotting. Horrible! So much I tell, but be the rest unsaid.

The people who strolled round with us found me a ghastly mirth. They trotted out the fearful patients with a pride of

Digitized by Google

mastership. These were their friends, their relatives, husbands or wives sometimes, and proud were they of the affinity. Man is so happily graced by nature—black and white the same—that if he have no ancestors nor gifted sons to boast, he will e'en take glory in a kinsman, something more leprous and more awful than his neighbours. Yes, some of these terrible creatures, both men and women, were married. The fruit of those ghastly loins it was we saw outside. By a log fire, cooking, I found a stalwart muscular negress. Beside her, watching us with all his eyes, a bright little man of two years old or so was perched. "Her son," she told me, and screamed to the father to present himself. From the dusky opening of the hive close by, a creature dragged himself to light. Hands and feet were gone, amputated in this case by my friend the doctor. The knees and wrists—bah! let us not think of it! Despair and pain had aged the victim to senility. His voice was scarcely human, sounding as transmitted through a drum from cavernous depths. Yet this woman lived with him, and bore him children. No feature of this dread disease is so universal as erotic phrenzy.

I would wish, if I dared, to tell in terms yet plainer the horrors of this "leper hospital" of Hopetown. I should like people in England, ay, and in Hopetown too, to know how such outcasts live, in this philanthropic century. Suffering the fellest pains, maimed, idiotic, with no hope in this world, nor knowledge of the next—our Christian magistrates house them worse than beasts, and leave the lightening of their agonies to a country doctor's charity. He has to negotiate diplomatically for their rations, and to fight a pitched battle for a blanket. The hope of ever seeing these poor wretches—surely the most miserable of all miserable things—under a decent roof, with light, and warmth, and shade, and decency, and cleanliness, has long departed. His modest importunity confines itself to beef and blankets. These small charities are not doled out without repining. God help the lepers, for there is no help in man!

Digitized by Google

I have little to say about the disease. The children of a leprous parent never escape. It shows itself at about ten years or later, and may be easily checked at that period. After a longer or shorter interval, it breaks out again, and may again, in most instances, be stayed. At eighteen to twenty, when thus interrupted, the fatal attack begins. The first sign, in all cases, is a thickening of the mucous membranes, and swelling of the brows and upper cheek. These results produce the sullen, growling voice, and stupid aspect of the leper. Afterwards the hands and feet stiffen. Then wounds appear, and the bitterness of death gets hold upon a man. At five-and-twenty he is wrinkled and attenuate, as one who has numbered the utmost age of man; at thirty, the poison has eaten to his heart, and in mercy kills him. It is not infectious. The women or the men who marry lepers do not take it, though Dr. Muskett was almost inclined to credit the native theory that a man marrying a leper's widow runs a risk. The cause of it is not venereal. Neither mercury nor arsenic have any effect. White men have been known to catch it, but in the only case of the doctor's knowledge, the victim committed suicide at an early stage. Kaffirs are found with it, but rarely. Hottentots, Corannas, and Bushmen, are the victims. There is little pain, except when a limb is in actual course of dropping off. Amputation will give some months' respite. Dr. Muskett treats the disease with strychnine, and is not willing to admit it incurable. He has two cases in which there has been no recurrence of the symptoms for five and six years respectively, but he dares not yet triumph. I could not learn how many "hospitals" of the sort exist in the colony. The largest is at Robbin Island, near Capetown. Here also, I am told, they suffer these unholy marriages, which perpetuate the loathsome breed.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

A VISIT TO WATERBOER'S ESTATE.

A visit to the Junction—Outspan at the house when first diamond was discovered—Mr. Gers's store at the Hook—Kindly hosts—The two rivers—Fish—Cross the junction—Waterboer's country-house—A village of Basuto Kaffirs—The people and their houses—Their wealth obtained through diamonds—The star of South Africa found here—Roy Kop—Diamond said to be found there—Its purchase and sale—Scenery of Roy Kop—Unusual abundance of quartz—Arrival of a trader from Namaqualand—Great drought there—Game preserving by Kaffir chiefs—Necessity of such laws—The story of Clarke the trader—His heroic death—Important results of this event—Performance of a bushman—Value of these slaves—Return to Hopetown—Assault on a white man in the street—Astonishing news from Dutoitspan—The probable result of Captain Rorke's action—A public ball in Hopetown—Return to Bultfontein—Survey of the country visited in their journeys—Filthy habits of the boers.

DEC. 28th, 1871.—At 3.15 A.M. the famed grey stallions were brought round, and Mr. Lilienfeld climbed up with me for a drive to the Hook. The first outspan was at a clean and pretty farm, lying in a sun-scorched valley. Being well supplied with water, it had a large garden, abundantly full of vegetables and fruit-trees. The luxuriance and variety of the foliage were almost tropical, but of fruit or flowers scarce a vestige had been left by a hailstorm some days before. The farmer, a boer, told us the stones were bigger than his mighty fist. Several cattle and sheep had been beaten to death before they could get shelter. In this garden a diamond of fifty-five carats was discovered, eighteen months ago, by the former owner, who straightway sold

Digitized by Google

the place and treked down southwards with his gem. The purchaser, our host, had as yet found nothing, but he neither prospected nor looked specially for diamonds.

The second outspan was at a farm of considerable interest. Here the very first diamond of South Africa was found. This is a dirty den, standing on a plateau so white with lime, and dazzling with bits of mica, one's eyes ache under the glare. We saw the boy who set this mighty enterprise a-foot, now grown into a stupid, dirty youth. The little windows of the house were scratched in every pane with the first diamond. Our hero has found two or three more since that time among the pebbles. Two hundred yards in front flows the Orange, through banks so deep only the green tree-tops are visible. Not an inch of soil has been disturbed by prospecting. If the sparkle of a diamond should catch the boer's quick eye, he will condescend to stoop and pick it up; but that is all. There are plenty of young Dutchmen on the fields, digging and sorting like men, but they are the ne'er-do-wells of the colony, or the cadets of a farmer's family.

Outspanned again at a little dirty cottage of one room, divided by a curtain, where dwelt an unwashed boer of seventy years, who had just scandalized the simple morals of the land by marrying with a buxom lass of twenty. Three other women seemed to live in the *ménage*, shy, dingy creatures, who, in their forms, to the artistic eye, committed unpardonable sins both of omission and commission. The cottage stood upon the river bank, and its garden, a waste of bushes, fallen trees, and shattered fences, stretched down the slope. A dozen savage dogs defended it, as usual. We talked and smoked, the while our horses took their forage, and then pushed on to Mr. Gers's most hospitable store upon the Hook. Our destination was reached at 2.30 P.M., having covered forty-eight miles in eleven hours and a quarter, which is fair travelling over a villainous road.

There are two spots of South Africa which dwell in my mind

Digitized by Google

as pleasant havens, where were always found rest and peace and cordial welcome; these are Mr. Wayland's farm of Belmont, and Mr. Gers's store at the Hook. Eskdale, I know, deserves equal honour, but it lies beyond the track, and I visited it but twice. The house at which we now arrived, is a tiny, rough-built dwelling, with three little rooms in front, and as many behind. First-floor it has none, of course. At one end is the shop, where all things may be bought, and every article of produce may be sold, from diamonds to potatoes. The Orange, here about two hundred and fifty yards in breadth—it is commonly accounted more than this —flows between long slopes, well-wooded, but bearing never a blade of grass, or root of flower. One's foot sinks deep in finest sand, thinly enclasped by arms of yellow-blossoming *Mesembryanthemum*, or vetch-like *cassia*. At intervals, a thicket of dry bushes, some of them flowering, spring from the barren earth. Most lovely beetles, golden and black, soft-shelled, swing like small birds from bough to bough. The air is quick with wings and chirrup. Each branch weighs down with nests. Before the stoop a level space is white with sheep, blatant with saucy goats, which browse upon the golden bushes, and impatiently await the guide who leads them to the upper pasture. Oxen, too, are there in scores, whatever moment one goes forth. Rough waggons stand about the while their owners take a drink, or share a chat, or drive a bargain with our host. Over all, the shadow of the trees, and ever present is the glimmer of the stream. Just opposite to us, but hidden by the bosky foliage, the deep green current of the Vaal divides the muddy Orange. Through an arched gap beyond, gleam sun-tipped eddies of the river, swollen to twice its former bulk. The murmur of the meeting waters faintly strikes one's ear. Such pleasant sounds of bird and stream, and happy buzzing insect; such sights of tree and blossom; such calm heaven, and placid easy life, but seldom meet the traveller in this most feverish of regions. And then, within the house, what simple comfort reigns! Here I first learned to eat the *barba*,

Digitized by Google

a prodigy of fishes, and to love it. Do you know the bull-head, the miller's thumb, we used to catch at home between the pebbles of the brook? Fancy this ugly beast of any size between a half-pound and two hundred-weight; give it great teeth more cutting than a pike's; adorn its big mouth with four long beards, and you will have the barba. But three fish are found in the rivers, so far as I know—this and the yellow fish, a handsome, active fellow, and the little white fish like a smelt. The barba is water-monarch. They tell me that he has been caught four hundred pounds in weight, when drought has sunk this stately river to a mere chain of pools. He eats like an eel, bearing indeed the same resemblance to that creature as bears our familiar bull-head. But with a German sauce, whereof I do not know the name or composition, he will be found to eat like blessed manna.

Dec. 29.—At four A.M. we got our cart and horses on the pont, and crossed at the very junction of the Vaal and Orange. I have said that both flow through a level country. As one stands upon the pont in middle stream, only the river-course is visible, edged with a dark green fringe of willows. The Hook, or point of land between the streams, is low as the rest, trees overshadowing its banks of mud. Moving onwards by the force of the current, and by the help of sweeps, we rounded the point and entered the waters of the Vaal. These are divided from the larger stream as far as one can see, by a softening line. At the junction they flow through the tawny current of the Orange, as oil will flow on water. Very gradually do they mix. Below the Hook, the streams combined may be a quarter of a mile or more in width; the usual depth is thirty feet.

Up the drift on the farther shore we found a small plateau, utterly herbless, much cut by sloots. In their steep banks one could perceive the strata of the bank. Beyond a doubt the Orange once flowed far to the north of its present channel. This plateau stands upon a conglomerate, a real macadam of pebbles bound together by lime. On the top is a layer of finest sand.

Digitized by Google

At a small farm-house close by, a gigantic Griqua made his appearance, and discoursed with us pleasantly. This is a favourite abode of Waterboer when weary of the excitement and maddening dissipation which no doubt reigns in his capital of Griquatown. Passing a sloot full fifty feet in depth, so awkward-looking as to alarm even my South African friends, we drove towards the Basuto villages. The Basutos are a Kaffir tribe of extensive range. They have thrust themselves amongst the Hottentot nations here, and are daily spreading further. Some of their chiefs have considerable wealth and power; we have even had a Basuto war, in which, as I have been informed, seven thousand horsemen turned out to resist our troops. But these Kaffirs are not formidable, though powerful and active men. The particular clan we were about to visit "squats" upon Waterboer's land. It pays no rent, but lives upon good terms with the chief.

Very soon we came upon the well-fenced gardens of the tribe, a model to boers. They were filled with Indian corn and vegetables. In the midst of each stood a lofty platform, whereon little Kaffir boys are used to sit and howl, scaring the birds. Over a rolling land, white, and scantily covered with grey grass, we came upon the first village. It straggles along the side of a slope, each hut in its own neat fence, which rises two yards high at least, and makes the yard as private as a little palace. Only the tall thatched roof can be seen above its top. The hut is always round, supported on a strong centre post. It has no windows, and is yet most fresh and wholesome. The only partitions in it are made by hanging beautiful karosses upon the radii beams which connect the centre post with the walls. The average diameter may be twenty feet; the walls inside rise, perhaps, eight feet; and the roof, sloping steeply upward, may be twenty feet above one's head in the middle.

The Kaffir architecture has thus a quaint and barbarous appearance; but, to enter the neat, dark, roomy hut, is to be at once convinced that here is the true style of building for this climate.

Digitized by Google

In the summer one steps from the hottest sunshine and most dazzling air I ever felt into the cool and healthful atmosphere of spring. The flies tormenting you outside buzz off disappointed to the nearest farm, there to batten on congenial foulness. The icy winds and cruel frost of winter cannot penetrate a thatch of two feet thick. We have all heard much of Kaffir barbarism, his nakedness, his dirt, and the rest of it. I do not contradict such reports in general, having visited only these Basutos. But "one should speak of a man as one finds him." There is a nakedness which is vastly more decent than clothing. I never saw English cottages half so cleanly as these huts. The floors are of ants' nests puddled, but there is not a speck of dirt or discolouration upon them. I should think the women must soak and sweep them out punctually each hour of the day, working the wet soil into neat patterns with the besom. Smells are simply non-existent; no cooking, nor washing, nor dirty work of any kind is allowed to be done beneath the roof. Such operations are carried on in perfect privacy outside, under shelter of the lofty hedge. The Kaffir host meets you at the narrow gap, his clean black face all smiles and welcome. The fat and sturdy babies whose development of adipose tissue would drive an English matron wild with envy, suck a well-washed thumb as they watch the stranger with bead-like eyes. There is not a speck of dirt upon their round brown bodies, still unconscious of sunburning as of clothes. The women and grown girls hastily throw a spotless handkerchief across their shoulders, and all display their snow-white teeth in unaffected joy to see an Englishman. How different is the welcome of a boer! welcome I call it, but indeed of that there is none. These Basutos have arrived at the dignity of clothing. The men all wear trousers, and the female children at an early age are rigged out with an old petticoat.

We spent a pleasant morning amongst these good-tempered fellows, gossiping with their chief, John Katlands, a brawny old fellow, all smiles and affection. From him I bought a magnificent

Digitized by Google

kaross of silver jackal skin for £3. These people have large flocks, both sheep and cattle. The greater part of them have been bought with diamonds picked up here. I saw a herd of twenty cows feeding on the hillside; a diamond had bought them. A brand new waggon, resplendent with paint, and twelve fine oxen belonging thereto, were the proceeds of another. The Kaffirs showed some reluctance to tell their success at first, recognising Mr. Lilienfeld as their new landlord; but on his assurance that no restitution would be demanded, they proved communicative. This spot, at the junction of the Vaal and Orange Rivers, appears to be unusually rich. The Kaffirs don't prospect on their land any more than the boers, but they traverse it more frequently when the sun is shining. They have perhaps quicker eyes, though in this respect the descendants of the stolid Dutch have almost attained to the savage level. Probably not fewer than a score of stones, mostly large, have been picked up in this immediate neighbourhood. The diamond which purchased that handsome waggon and fine oxen was found by a lucky fellow in planting the hedge round his new hut. Most certainly the "Star of South Africa," now lying at Messrs. Hunt and Roskell's, was discovered close to this spot. As many barren places claim the honour as did Grecian cities Homer's birthplace, but it is quite sure that the Hottentot who found it first offered his prize for sale at Mr. Gers's store. Mr. Gers was absent, and his assistant did not like to risk so large a sum as £200, the finder's modest price. Niekirk, the man who suspected the first diamond, had the next offer, and he closed the bargain for £400 of goods and cattle. He sold it in turn for £12,000 to Messrs. Lilienfeld, of Hopetown, who disposed of it to Messrs. Hunt and Roskell at a very small profit.

Dec. 30.—Visited Roy Kop, a farm belonging to Mr. Lilienfeld, on this side the Orange. Here also, it is said, a diamond has been discovered. I was present when a Kaffir brought it to the store, a handsome stone, peculiar for its "skin" or coat of pinkish

Digitized by Google

tint, and for its texture. Not to use scientific terms, which I imperfectly understand, this stone showed all the edges of its layers; so thin no instrument could measure them, but perfectly perceptible, they lay upon one another on every side of the stone. It weighed about twenty carats, and Mr. Gers bought it for £20. He subsequently sold it to a Hollander, who professed great knowledge of the subject, for four hundred sheep. If that Hollander be not a wise man by this time, Heaven help him—for he must be a fool predestined!

Of all the filthy folks to whom wide travel has introduced me, the boer family on Roy Kop is actually the filthiest. Words would not describe the dirt upon their persons and their furniture. A servant worthy of such a household came bustling forth to greet our driver. Stark to the waist, she showed such monstrous rolls of fat as made one shudder. Her blood was Hottentot and boer, and it may not be told how strikingly developed were the characteristics of the former race. Passing on, we reached a scenery more barren than is common even here. On either side were hills which bore no crop except of pebbles; here and there a bush or cactus showed itself; fragments of crystal and quartz abounded, in one part the earth was covered with them, and each spicula glittered like a diamond. There is probably a reef upon the surface here. I looked for gold, but found none. The sand is red, and hence Roy Kop (Red Hill Farm). We visited a hole in which the boers had worked some little time, prospecting, without success. Mr. Lilienfeld was most anxious I should perceive the resemblance borne by the earth here excavated to that of Pniel and Klipdrift. I cheerfully admitted it to be identical in appearance. Elsewhere he showed me limey grit precisely like New Rush; this also I accepted willingly. The fact is, all the soil within a hundred miles around is just like one or other. If a farmer have not red Pniel sand on his property, he has surely New Rush grit. All that is needed to make the "stuff" identical is just a few

Digitized by Google

diamonds. I should have been vastly more interested if Mr. Lilienfeld could have shown me soil *unlike* to one or other.

In the afternoon, a cracking of whips, a shouting, a creak of wheels, and bellowing of oxen, heralded the advent of a trader. He proved to be a fine young man from Holland, returning from a four months' trip into Namaqualand. Such a journey is but a little run, an outing. The inland trader goes for eighteen months at least, perhaps five years. I understood that our visitor had been unfortunate upon the whole. He described the season in Namaqualand as exceptionally dry. Horses, oxen, and men had lived for weeks upon wild melons, every spring and river being dry. Even the ostriches had suffered, many running off, and the rest small and badly feathered, through successive years of drought. Seventeen horses had given out, and a great number of cattle. The former he had left with native chiefs, to feed them up, and these would be recovered; but the oxen he totally lost. These misadventures, I concluded, drained the profits of the journey, for our Hollander certainly brought out a prodigious quantity of feathers. I bought three lions' skins at a pound apiece, and left Mr. Gers deeply and scientifically bargaining for a half-dozen chests of plumes. By the way, I first heard from this gentleman to what extent the game is now preserved by native chieftains. It would appear that God's flocks are claimed by Kaffir as by English country gentlemen. The untutored mind of the poor African does not yet rise to the sublimest height of squiredom. He still allows any one to kill game for his own wants. But if it come to hunting on his land, whether ostrich or elephant, for purposes of trade, he very justly demands a share. In theory this, like other dues, is only held for the public benefit, but as matter of fact the chief and *raad* divide the tax amongst them.

The game license is, I understand, a novelty, though almost universal now. One cannot but rejoice to hear of any check upon the massacre that goes on at every season of the year. Not less

Digitized by Google

than half a million hides, antelope and zebra, are exported from these parts, and the rarer species are already exterminated throughout the Free State and the Transvaal. It will, I should think, require millions of population, and centuries of time, to drive away the prolific springbok, and the other treking animals; but the beautiful *koodoo*, the *hartebeest*, and other valuable creatures, yearly thin. This half-million represents probably not more than a moiety of those that fall. Unfortunately, I fear that the greatest offenders override any law the frontier natives may impose. Boers go up in parties too strong to be interfered with, and murder the antelopes at their leisure. Traders only kill for their own use, being utterly unconscious of that lust of blood which marks the raw English sportsman. Space is too valuable in their waggons for the collection of hides not worth beyond two shillings apiece. The elephant and the ostrich are the prey they follow, and this chase, taking them far from help of white men, demands the aid of many negroes, whom the chief supplies. It is thus impossible to evade the tax, or to poach and ride away. Most of the difficulties, however, that arise between the trader and his host, spring from this source. The frontiers of a chieftain are scarcely defined. Except amongst the greater potentates, there are questions of disputed boundary, usurpations, legitimate rights freely disposed of, and rights *de facto* fiercely asserted. Traders are men not given to calculate the odds too closely, whether of law or battle. Hence disputes not unfrequent, and sometimes bloodshed. It is believed that more than one Englishman, finding himself engaged in a hopeless struggle, has embraced the desperate counsel that gave Clarke a name for ever in South Africa. I have heard this tale related in several fashions. It appears, beyond doubt, that our hero was in fault. Whether he insulted a missionary's wife, or whether he derided his teaching, I do not know, nor does any one else probably. But the consequences were so terrible, that every Kaffir will recollect them, and poor Clarke has saved perhaps a hundred lives by the awful revenge he took. Whatever cause it

Digitized by Google

was which raised the missionary's ire, he persuaded the chief to order Clarke's arrest. The trader came up, and was sentenced to receive two dozen lashes. A crowd of all the Kaffirs near assembled to behold the punishment. Clarke offered to receive the blows in private from a white man; but, as the tale is told, the man of God most urgently protested against this compromise. Seeing his degradation to be resolved, the trader ordered off his son, a boy of twelve years old, sprang into his waggon, and threw a box of blazing matches into an open powder-barrel. Some hundreds of pounds were stored there, and the explosion blew the crowd, the waggons, and the houses near, to undistinguishable atoms. They say that two hundred natives, with the missionary and the chief, were killed. It is enough now, in every kraal between the Orange and Zambesi, that a man should wave a penny match above an empty barrel, to ensure immediate respect for his demands.

In the evening we had heavy rain and thunder. A Bushman was brought in to amuse us with imitations, such as his race have amazing talent in. He was believed to be thirty-five years of age, but looked much younger; his height and figure those of an English boy twelve years of age. Certainly, I never heard, even amongst the Bornean Dyaks, such extraordinary mimicking. The baboon I could exactly appreciate, and the lion, hyena, and other animals were too curious to be unlike reality. The little fellow seemed shy. He walked round the edge of the room, and no temptation would induce him to set foot upon the carpet, which indeed he looked at with the keenest, brightest, shiftiest eyes, more wonderingly than at aught else. This bushman had been caught by boers, his parents murdered, of course, at an early age. He belonged to our trading friend, who would not part with him at any figure. Without one or two of these wild men, who rival beasts in every instinct, whilst possessing their full share of human cunning, a trader who has many cattle would be absolutely lost.

Digitized by Google

Dec. 31st.—Left the Hook 3.40 A.M., reached Hopetown 2.30 P.M. It seems to be my fate to travel always on a Sunday. In the afternoon, saw a big "bastard Hottentot" strike a white man in the street without provocation. No one who possessed an ounce of reflection, would hesitate to interfere in such a case. Nothing less weighty than self-preservation calls on the bystander to lend a hand, if necessary, in avenging the insult. I ran across the road at once, being the only witness, but found assistance quite unneeded. The white man, though small, had dragged his big assailant from his horse, and was engaged in kicking his ugly head when I came up. Such assaults have not been rare in Hopetown lately. Sometimes, of course, the wanton aggressor is a white man; and it has been known in such a case, that a stalwart Kaffir has avenged his dignity in open ring, whilst traders and store-keepers saw fair play—to the credit of Hopetown be it told. It is not Kaffirs, however, who commit wanton assaults.

Jan. 1st, 1872.—I found Mr. Webb better, but greatly disturbed in mind by the receipt of an extraordinary proclamation lately issued by Captain Rorke, claim-inspector of Dutoitspan. It runs to this effect:—

"NOTICE.

"Notice is hereby given that the Inspectors and Sub-inspectors have instructions to receive the Government rates for diggers' licenses, and no other or greater rates.

"By order,
(Signed) "R. FORRESTER RORKE,
"Inspector of Claims.

"*Office of Inspector of Claims, Dutoitspan.*
"*26th December*, 1871."

It was certainly difficult to understand with what particular ideas in view this mischievous edict was penned, and writing now, with the knowledge that the Commissioners promptly withdrew it, I am still more at a loss to comprehend why it was issued. It had not been disputed by any one, excepting diggers who had not read the Proclamation No. 71—or who held them-

Digitized by Google

selves above all law—that proprietors possessed the right, if they had the will, to raise the license fee. Captain Rorke, himself, in a letter dated Nov. 19, had transmitted to Mr. Webb a transcript from his instructions in these words:—

"*Inspector's Office, Dutoitspan, 19th November*, 1871.

"SIR,—I have the honour to transmit for your information the following extract from my instructions received from her Majesty's Commissioners:—

"'Mr. Webb, the proprietor, I think contemplates raising the rate of licenses on his lands. This he has power to do; but as he wisely concurs in the view which I have expressed to him, that a sudden change would be unadvisable as regards existing licenses, I wish it to be understood, as between the owner, the Government, and the diggers, that the acceptance by Mr. Webb of the old rates for a time is not a bar to future increase, if it should be deemed prudent to make one.'

"I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

(Signed) "RICHARD F. RORKE,

"Inspector, Pniel District.

"*H. B. Webb, Esq., Bultfontein.*"

In the face of this, to issue the notice above was an act which politeness forbids me to characterize. Perhaps the reader does not clearly perceive to what it tended. Some days before Mr. Webb's departure from Bultfontein, it reached his ears that Captain Rorke was granting licenses, to parties of three, at the rate of 5*s*., as though Dutoitspan were a farm on which the Government retained the reservation of minerals. As was pointed out in a former chapter, the regulations do not give proprietors a right to overlook the Inspector's doings, or to demand a show of his accounts. In consequence, Mr. Webb could do no more than write to Captain Rorke that such reports had reached him, and to warn the Inspector that he would be held personally liable for the difference between the 5*s*. license he had granted, and the 10*s*. 6*d*. demanded by the proprietors. It was, perhaps, to shield himself from this liability, and to make things pleasant with the diggers, that Captain Rorke issued the notice. By it, though almost immediately withdrawn, the danger and difficulty of raising the license fee at some future time were greatly increased. Mr.

Digitized by Google

Webb had no intention of so doing; at the moment that I write, in July, no such course had been attempted; but he strongly declined to have his legal rights cut from him in such a surreptitious manner.

In the evening was a public ball, which I attended with Mr. Lilienfeld. Quite a score of ladies were present, mostly in evening dress; the modest cut of their robes semed almost ugly, and quite antiquated, to the European eye. But the beauty of one sex, and the courtesy of the other, were most creditable to Hopetown. We danced in a room twenty feet by fifteen, and had supper in a closet, whilst beer and other liquids were retailed in a corner cupboard. Our band consisted of five concertinas, all of a row; the musicians had been kept up all the day in close confinement, our stewards relieving one another in guarding them. The excitement promised would infallibly have driven them to drink if free.

Jan. 3.—Started on my return at five A.M., with Mr. W., an elephant hunter *en retraite*, and Mr. Gers, as companions. Rising earliest, I found Mr. W. asleep upon the open stoop, protected from its flags by a mat of hide, almost as hard as the stones themselves; for this couch, more uninviting than Margery Daw's, he had abandoned a comfortable bed. Before reaching Belmont one of our four horses fell ill, and with difficulty we got him to the farm; fortunately, Mr. Wayland had in charge a handsome gelding of Mr. W.'s, left there in grass to recover the fatigue of his last hunt. We did not know whether the animal had been in harness, but, of course, it was resolved to try. After breakfast, the Hottentots drove him up, and we inspanned. Such a row ensued! Tearing and raging, he dashed about, under the strong hands of Mr. Gers, whilst Mr. W. applied the long whip unsparingly. After a dozen shaves of the most alarming narrowness, he galloped steadily onwards, and we reached Jacobsdaal at eight P.M., slept at a filthy hotel there, and arrived at Bultfontein next day by breakfast time.

Digitized by Google

Having now seen a considerable proportion of the land just annexed, and its neighbourhood, I feel confidence in stating that Her Majesty possesses not, in all her empire, another strip of country so unlovely; I speak without prejudice. Such a weary, dreary waste scarce Aden's self could show; wide plain succeeds to plain, broken only by naked piles of pebbles, or low red hills; a dull green carpet of wild camomile, grey felt of sage, or duller spread of scanty grass stretch to the dim horizon; through the burnt herbage shows a pale red sand, or snowy grit; at intervals an aloe raises its head, or a dwarf acacia, three feet high, forms a landmark visible for miles; in the dry and dusty watercourses—deep riven by furious rains—a brighter patch of green betrays the feathery cotton plant of the Cape; on low hillocks, parched as a heap of cinders, rough thickets grow amongst the stones, each shrub six feet apart. Fifty yards on each side the Vaal or Orange River there are trees, willows, and acacias, but the earth is bare and sandy as elsewhere; trunks and shrubs are girded with dust, as though it had flooded them like swollen water. Once or twice in each day's ride the traveller exclaims in accents of delight, "Why, there's a tree!" as some poor feeble camel-thorn comes into view, which would think itself ridiculed in England if we dignified it with the name of bush. Flowers there are indeed of no mean beauty, but lost in the colourless waste; about every twenty miles, one reaches what we are pleased to call a farm, some nasty hut, standing beside its dam of rain water, and inhabited by a filthy race of savages—the boer. Such unutterably dirty dens are most of them—nine in ten would be a generous average—that even men colonial born, who are not used to be particular, will sit outside in the shadow of their carts, whilst the team is resting, rather than enter them. Poverty is not an excuse for the farmers' beastly habits. Wretched though the country looks, it is well liked by sheep; and the man whose family all pig together in two cabins, with stinking skins piled in each corner, raw flesh drying on the rafters, every disgusting parasite in heaps

Digitized by Google

upon the floor, shears perhaps five thousand fleeces in the year, and owns some hundred head of horses and cattle. It would be an unmerited insult to the Basuto Kaffir of the Hook to compare him with the boer who calls himself his superior—to compare him at least in all that concerns decent and cleanly living. Regarding the moral qualities of the farmer, I am in no position to judge, being but a stranger in the land; and I shall not give publicity to reports which may be prejudiced. But his ways of life are visible matters, about which there can be no mistake.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRIAL OF THE RIOTERS.

Stirring rumours at Hopetown—The truth of them—A biter bitten—Imminent danger of Messrs. W—— from the mob—Christmas stories of the diggings—Ghastly tale from Benning and Martin's—Native thefts—Story of Stewart and his Kaffirs—Mr. Giddy, our new magistrate—Warrants issued against three leading rioters—Threatening crowds—Hearing of the case—The prosecutor and the prisoners—Indecorous scenes in court—The New Rush offered for bail—Ovation to the accused.

JAN. 5th, 1872.—Rumours of dreadful disturbance had been rife at Hopetown. We heard that several blacks were hanged, several tents and canteens burnt, riot triumphant. There was but little foundation for these stories. It appears that some gentleman who vehemently suspected his Kaffirs, employed a Hottentot instigator or *provocateur*. He gave this man some money and a diamond, instructing him to act either as buyer or seller, according to circumstances. The first essay, however, resulted in his arrest. He asked a Kaffir of reputed dishonesty to sell his plunder. The indignant black denounced his tempter, and he was seized by furious diggers. Without listening to any explanation, they put a rope about the neck of the detective, and marched him round in search of a tree. Before his master could interfere, a frightful flogging was administered. I take it that Hottentot will not again volunteer to discover thieves.

The second case nearly resulted in more serious disturbance. A boy in the service of Messrs. W—— conceived the notion of speculating in stolen gems. His agent also was denounced by

Digitized by Google

the first Kaffir solicited, and a mighty crowd drew up before Messrs. W——'s store, with the object of burning it down. It was with the utmost difficulty they were dissuaded from this act of violence. The owners, however, finally proved to the ringleaders' satisfaction that their clerk had acted only on his private account. He was given into custody, and committed for trial at Klipdrift. I know that the natural chiefs of New Rush diggers, the men of wealth and education, are not a little afraid of disorder. Their first riot showed them the danger of rousing spirits they had not influence to quell. Prudent men will bear heavy wrongs when to right them is a risk of sack and fire.

There is always abundance of news in camp. From day to day your friends make fortunes, or give up the struggle, or die. A nigger is caught with fifty carat diamonds hidden in a rotten tooth, or in the quick of his nail, or something of that sort. The friend of your sensitive bosom has fought a blacksmith, and appears with eyes in gloom. Christmas week of course contributed an unusual supply of news and scandal. There have been races and other larks. But only one story shall I extract from my diary, quaintest in horror.

Two gentlemen have just left me after a morning call. In the course of conversation, one referred to the death that took place in Benning and Martin's hotel on Christmas night. "By Something!" cried the other "have you heard that story? It was the best joke I ever saw!" "Never knew such fun!" rejoined the first. My visitors were not heartless men, far from it, as many a poor soul could substantiate; nor were they men to applaud a feeble jest. I begged the tale. In hearing one doesn't know whether to laugh or shudder. I repeat it as told to me. Such a picture of camp life should not be omitted for any qualms of sentiment.

Said M.: "That corpse had such adventures as no corpse ever had before——"

"You see," Captain G—— interposed, "the poor fellow had

Digitized by Google

been lying in a tent for months, scarcely attended on; and when his friends came to Mrs. Martin, about three days before Christmas, and asked shelter for him, she would not hear of refusing. Every one about the house was coddling up that invalid, and he wasn't young nor handsome either——"

"And poor as Job, when that chap was sorting the ash-heap on his head!" cried M.

"Well, Mrs. Martin nursed him like a good woman, but it was evident the poor devil had his billet up above.* So Charles—you know the Irish waiter Charles?—began in his honest way to get anxious about the undertaker's bill. He said nothing to Martin, but just sat down by the bed-head, and asked the dying man how he proposed to pay his funeral expenses. The man didn't reply, which Charles thought very right and proper; he was evidently running over the estimate. Always willing to help, Charles proceeded to consider the proprieties of the case. He pointed out that a first-class funeral would be absurd, when the corpse had no claim to consideration, whether by birth or fortune. "£6 is about the figure, *I* should say," he wound up. "Youv'e been a big man! We'll want a half dozen stout boys to carry ye! Say six pounds. Now, where is it?" H. and F. were dying of suppressed laughter in the next room.

"But the man only blinked his eyes, and Charles gave it up after awhile, retiring to consult a big Russian who had claimed to be the sick man's chum, and a Mr. H., a storekeeper, who was known to be his brother-in-law. Finding how matters stood, the Russian promptly declined to pay a penny; and the brother-in-law, a successful man, vehemently disowned the invalid. The three went back, pulled out the poor fellow's

* I must not let this opportunity pass of doing justice to as kindly hosts as ever kept an inn. The tales of charity and good-nature attributed to Mr. and Mrs. Martin are counted in scores upon the fields. I myself am indebted to them for the readiest kindness, and few poor fellows asked aid in vain from this hospitable couple.

Digitized by Google

traps, and began appraising their contents. Martin's attention was called by observing Charles emerge with a pair of gold spectacles, which he leisurely weighed, and valued audibly at two pounds ten. Very mad was Martin. He kicked out the Russian bear and the storekeeper, and sent out to engage a watcher. One was found at length, an old Frenchman. The sick man still existed, looking heavily about. Our ancient Gaul certainly performed his duty with conscience. He watched the man as if life depended on his eyes, and when at length the poor wretch died, *Enfin!* exclaimed the nurse, and straightway began to draw the trousers off the corpse. These he made neatly into a parcel, and thrust out of sight; then lustily called for aid in laying out the body."

"If Martin had known these goings on he'd have raised the camp!" I said.

"Martin had left," M. answered. "Well, the old warrior laid out his corpse, and offered to sit with it all night—that was Christmas night. Our friend G. here, and F., whom you know, dined at Martin's, and were put to sleep next room. Hearing a noise in the night, and being confoundedly wide awake under *all* the circumstances, they got up, and looked through a rent in the baize partition. The room was almost dark, but they could indistinctly see the death-bed, and a still form on it. Fancy——"

"Yes, fancy!" cried G.

"Fancy their horror to behold the dead man gradually rise to a sitting posture, and glare at them! F. fell backwards in a fit, and G. here holload so he roused the house. It was discovered that the Frenchman had lain down beside the corpse—finding it cool, I reckon."

"But that wasn't the last adventure of that body," exclaimed G.

"Surely," I said, "the poor wretch caused no further fun?"

"Didn't he, though! The cream of all is coming. You know there was a big party here, in Bultfontein House, on Christmas night? Well, the guests separated pretty late. It was near

Digitized by Google

dawn, and we virtuous people of the Pan had long since dropped asleep. From this dissipated mansion came strolling down H. and B., dying of thirst, as they confessed to one another—no discredit to the hospitality of the Residence, you know——"

"Rather the reverse," I observed.

"Well, sir, down came those gentlemen in that suffering condition. 'Must have a B. and S.,' says B. 'I'd die for one,' says H. 'Let's knock up Martin, and make him get it,' adds B. They prowled around the house, and in no long time discovered a dying light. Peeping through the window, 'I see him,' whispers B. 'Martin! Hi, Martin!' No answer. 'Martin, it's B. and H.; want a B. and S.' No answer. 'I'll get through, and stir him,' says B. 'Do!' says H. Through the window B. climbs, goes to the bed, and gives the corpse a punch. The clothes fell off, and showed——"

"That's the most ghoulish story I ever heard," I said. "What followed?"

"B. climbed back like a drunken lamplighter, and mighty ill was he outside. Next day he left the camp for Tattin, and has not been seen since. H. fled to Klipdrift. What do you think of that for a midsummer night's dream?"

"Or a winter's tale," I said. "I think that if the British public heard it they would believe much worse of you and of these diggings than either would deserve."

There are plenty of stories current about native thieves. I believe it to be a fact that one was caught the other day with a big diamond hidden in his leg, thrust into a gash self-inflicted. My friend Stewart is full of suspicion. The other day he found a fragment of rock crystal, not too unlike a diamond. Watching his opportunity he thrust this object into the stuff upon his sorting table, and retired. Twenty minutes after, his Kaffirs began to sing hilariously. But they did not confess to any find, when the stuff was all sorted off, nor had seen the crystal. Stewart, convinced that this was an attempted robbery and no mistake, sent for the

Digitized by Google

police, and had them searched. Nothing turned up. Thereupon the Kaffirs all deserted, and poor Stewart finds a difficulty in engaging others. He is quite certain they have robbed him, and that they took the crystal believing it to be a diamond. It may be so, but I ask why he leaves three Kaffirs to sort without superintendence? The fact is, that diggers expect from these poor savages such virtue as they could scarcely credit in a white man. It is an homage to pure nature, but one scarcely fair, for they will not trust whilst they entrust. Be it observed, no man so mad as to give credit to the Christian negro for any vestige of honesty.

Jan. 6th.—Mr. Giddy, our new Civil Commissioner and magistrate, has shown himself the determined man wanted here. He does not share that sympathy with "diggers' feelings" that so curiously distinguished his predecessor, Mr. Gilfillan. Disregarding the open and published threats of New Rush, and the prudent counsel of his friends, he issued warrants against the three most violent of the rioters, Messrs. Maclean, Manby, and Malam. And these warrants he has seen executed. The case came on for hearing to-day at ten A.M. Before that hour the main street of Dutoitspan was very lively. A large crowd of diggers from New Rush had assembled outside the tiny court-house, talking loudly in knots, and overflowing into the near canteens. The intention of rescuing the accused, in case they should be committed, was literally shouted out. Nor do I entertain the smallest doubt that this project would have been effected. As time went on, the mob increased. Every cart from New Rush was crammed with excited visitors, and each well-known face aroused a cheer. The accused received an ovation, as they drove up, surrounded by their friends. At 10.30 A.M. the case was called, and a slight rush ensued. Mr. Giddy's court-house, a temporary one, is about 20 feet by 12 feet, built of wood, with a roof of corrugated iron. The prisoners answered to their names, and were provided with seats, passed from hand to hand over the diggers' heads outside,

Digitized by Google

and so through the sunny window; boxes they were with the lids torn off. Nothing is more expensive than a chair at these diggings. Then Ascher, whose canteen had first been burnt, was called, and no outbreak of indignation greeted him. He described himself as a canteen-keeper, but several voices accused him of having lately left the hulks at Capetown. Mr. Ascher has not a prepossessing face, but that is an imperfect justification for bringing his tent down. His evidence, descriptive of the attack on his canteen, was received with some hooting. The prisoners, seated on their empty boxes before the magistrate—all so close together in that tiny shed, each could have shaken hands with another, prisoners with prosecutor and magistrate with both—the prisoners behaved with creditable respect and propriety. Only one of the three looked quite like a digger. Maclean is a tall and powerful young fellow, in flannel shirt, velveteen trousers, and dirty puggary. His hands and arms, exposed, are scarred with ancient wounds; his clothes and face white with the limey dust. Manby is a little man, who seems to concentrate all his faculties in the effort to retain his eyeglass in its place. Malam is a watchmaker by business, and an auctioneer in his idle moments.

The court grew very hot before any conclusive evidence had been taken. Ascher deposed that Malam first entered his tent, and struck him with an empty bottle right away. The blow made him "insensible," but he found his memory faithful as to many incidents that took place during this state of coma. Mr. Giddy adjourned to the new court-house, not yet quite finished. This building has the misfortune to stand next door to a canteen. The day was very hot. As time went on, the proceedings became more and more boisterous. Men went in and out between bar and court, making a holiday of it, seeking the regular weekly drink in one building and the weekly spree in the other. They smoked cigars and pipes, lolled on the benches, cocked their hats in the awful face of justice, and shouted out their opinions to one another. The police made no attempt to preserve respect of

Digitized by Google

court, but lighted their own pipes, and wetted their own throttles, as bold as any. Mr. Giddy sat actually alone, the representative of law and justice, amidst a drunken and angry crowd, without one arm to support him. He kept his temper and fulfilled his duty in the uproar, but it was a most undignified position for a magistrate to hold. In the result, Manby and Maclean were bound over in £200 each, and Malam in £100, to appear when called on by the public prosecutor. When it was asked who would go bail for the prisoners, the diggers present shouted with one voice, "All Colesberg Kopje! We'll give New Rush for bail!" Then they were released, and the crowd snatched up their heroes by leg and arm, and paraded them all down the street. It was not thought at the time that anything more would be heard of the prosecution if no further outbreak occurred. But Mr. Giddy proved to be of more obstinate stuff.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

A PANIC ON THE DIGGINGS.

The first panic in the diamond market—Its causes—The present yield—The new Brazilian mine—Results of the panic—Prices offered—Two despondent diggers—No probability of fresh discoveries at present—Benefit these fields have wrought to Cape Colony—Question whether the utmost good has not now been extracted—Verification of my prophecy.

JAN. 13th.—The Nemesis of our success has overtaken us today. A panic rules in the diamond market at home, and the reaction strikes us cruelly. There is no business doing in the *koopers'* tents. Many have closed their doors. The diggers are half-angry, half-dismayed. They had encouraged each other to believe that since the market had borne so much, its patience must be inexhaustible. Sensible men knew the catastrophe must come, but they had scarcely provided against it. I know that today there are acquaintances of my own who anticipated a heavy fall, but who will be obliged to sell at panic prices notwithstanding. The fact is, our luck has so constantly borne us through, the most prudent only looked at the future logically, not practically. All communities, I think, have a black day in their commercial calendar. The discovery of a new market or a new source of wealth makes a fortune for some, but leads the mass into over-speculation. If this be true of ordinary trading, which deals in needful objects, it is doubly verified in articles of mere luxury. The fact was as plain as noontide sun that a glut must follow our astonishing labours here. I should be afraid to mention my own estimate of the monthly yield of diamonds. The Cape

Digitized by Google

Government appears to think £300,000 about the figure; at this computation £3,600,000 is to be our export in this current year. It has not been so much, or the tenth part of so much, in the first part of the twelve months past, for Dutoitspan was only opened up last March, and New Rush was struck in August. But £300,000 a month for an undetermined time is the calculation which paralyzes London merchants, with the absolute certainty that £3,000,000 worth of diamonds will be poured into their hands at this rate. And this they are to absorb besides the usual current of supply from the Brazils! And no panic shall ensue! Diggers expect too many miracles.

Jewels are not a prime necessity of life, not, at least, for any one below the rank of countess or cotton-spinner's lady. The number of these classes is limited, perhaps fortunately. Many of the members have already as much of the article as they can use; the markets of the world might yet absorb a large amount without straining, but the flood pours in too rapidly. I am writing the case as it appeared to me at the time, as, to a great extent, it appears to me now, though I have studied the subject with home lights, and no panic rules in the market—this June, 1872. Dealers believe the supply is falling off. I do not share that opinion. New Rush, the marvel of all Dorados, is wearing out, as I have several times told it would; but I believe that it will keep up its full average to the very last. And there are other fields, to me known, compared with which even New Rush might tremble for its fame. Therefore do I transcribe the remarks I find in my diary of this January 13th, because I still believe them sound and true for all that has come and gone since they were penned.

Of buyers scarce any are to be found to-day. The koopers sit silent in their canvas dens, and miserably estimate their losses probable. Discount at six per cent., insurance and commission so much; what do I stand to lose with diamonds down one-third? Such is the dismal calculation that employs them. The brokerage business employed, I should think, one-tenth of the population;

Digitized by Google

it has quite broken up and vanished for the present. Yellow and off-coloured stones, such as form the vast majority, have absolutely no sale. I heard of a Dutchman yesterday who hawked about a forty-eight carat of the finest lustre and flawless, but not pure white, without a bid. Nowhere could he find above £1 per carat, whilst £300 would have been thought moderate on Tuesday. At last the poor fellow grew so humble he asked but £1 7*s.* 6*d.* and was universally refused. Hundreds of men in the like case are wandering up and down at this moment in New Rush and Dutoitspan. They pause half sullenly beside the few open doors, behind which sits a kooper, playing with his useless scales, and grumble out, "Buy a diamond, sir?" in the most hopeless voice. The answer is an angry "No!" or perhaps, before the digger has had time to speak, his burly frame, casting a shadow on the dazzling sand, has roused the merchant to a hasty growl, "I don't buy any more yet awhile!" and the fellow turns scowling away, for the great mass of diggers are convinced that this so-called panic is a mere conspiracy against them. Those who resist the prevalent conviction take a desponding view equally foolish, so far as one can judge at such a distance. An example of their feelings came under my own notice yesterday. I was talking to the representative of one of our great London firms outside his canvas house. Two fine specimens of the African-English race lounged past with lingering steps. They would have been counted mighty men even in Gath of the Philistines. Their great limbs were clad in corduroy; their faces were brown and bearded; their hands had not felt water since yesterday—not for a week if one should judge by looks—and they were covered with old scars and discolorations where the poisonous lime had festered in some trifling scratch. They had too the swollen lids and bloodshot eyes that "sorting" entails, but, for all such blemishes, they were excellent samples of our South African kindred. They wandered listlessly past, and then one turned sharp round and asked defiantly the usual formula, "Buy diamonds to-day, sir?" They stood at a

Digitized by Google

distance, as if expecting a refusal, but my companion answered "Yes," and led the way inside. The gems, result perhaps of weeks of weary labour, were produced from a scrap of rag, within which was a tin box, and in that again the finger of a glove. They proved to be four in number,—a superb and spotless stone of fifteen carats, of excellent shape, and the brightest possible orange in colour; the other three were fine white chips, weighing ten carats amongst them. "How much?" asked the diamond merchant. "Fifty pounds" was the reply. My friend passed them back across the table without a word. "What will you give, sir?" asked the spokesman in a weary sort of way, as if he had put the same question fifty times in the last hour. "Can't make an offer at the price. Diamonds are down forty per cent., and yellow ones can't be sold at all." The diggers rose, and the precious box was unscrewed again; "If I can't get fifty pounds for all my sweat an' the health I've lost, I'll just pitch them stones into the Vaal!" muttered one. "Ay, Jack," said the other, "we'se tak' the ould jack-plane i' hand agin. It ain't no worth lookin' for more of the condemned things!" They went out with a roughly courteous "Good-bye," and wandered up the street. There are not a few of their class to-day who seriously think of "the ould jack-plane," or some other instrument with which they got a living before these deceiving diamonds were heard of.

But as the belief in a conspiracy is very wide-spread, but a small proportion of the diggers believe their prospects to be greatly worn. I need not say that the Leviathans of Dutoitspan and New Rush, being for the most part educated men, and not taken by surprise in this event, feel quite easy as to the ultimate value of their finds. The mass of diggers, those who live from hand to mouth, selling the greater part, or all they discover, for mere food and drink, are meditating desperate courses. Their anger is turned upon the middlemen, who buy at the claim side, and sell at large profit to the real merchants. There is a scheme organizing for the direct transmission of the diamonds to England, a project

Digitized by Google

which, if it be carried out, will have the effect of throwing the home market into confusion worse confounded. It is easy to understand how the present pass has been brought about. The Brazils trade with all parts of the world. Their annual yield of diamonds is distributed at once. Paris gets its share, and London, and St. Petersburg, and other capitals. But every stone in South Africa has gone to London direct, and the fortnightly parcel is so large, there is not time to scatter it before the next mail comes in. Hence, dealers have unmanageable accumulations on their hands. For this there is no remedy but time. We hear wonders also of a new mine lately opened in Brazil. I need not tell ladies, and other persons who understand the subject, that in just the same proportion as the old Indian stones are superior to the Bahia, so the latter are superior to those found at the Cape, *on an average.* We must wait to see how far the reports of this Loboso mine are confirmed. It may be all that is reported, or may not. Then, again, and most important fact of all, dealers at home have only those tremendous figures of £300,000 a month before them. They do not know that New Rush is already showing its bed rock. These diamond fields, they say, have been open four years, have been seriously worked for two-and-a-half. In that time, not less than three millions sterling have been turned out, a figure which the new dry diggings propose to outdo annually. Mr. Emanuel scarcely expects to be believed, when he tells us that the Bahia mines are asserted to have turned out "the astonishing amount of twelve millions sterling in fifty years!" What is this beside the South African diggings? But it does not follow, perhaps, that our fields are so enormously more productive than those of Brazil. The system of working is so wholly different. There, the crown steps in, and makes the digging a monopoly. We get all our golden eggs at once. Every white man is free to dig almost where he pleases, and to sell his finds as seems best to him. What calculations can be made under such a system?

It is impossible to deny that another Colesberg Kopje may be

Digitized by Google

found from day to day. Any barren hillock round may be full of diamonds as a Christmas pudding of plums; but no one here believes that a digging exists within many miles. They go to all the new rushes, of course, on the "off chance," not expecting, nor perhaps wishing to find. Rich diamond fields there are in the country beyond doubt, but very few know of them. Lying at a great distance, they are not likely to be "rushed" this long time, if ever. And it is a fact, that not in all places where gems lie upon the surface, does it pay to dig for them. On the other hand, it must be confessed that "prospecting" is a forgotten art, or one, at least, utterly fallen into disuse. I cannot hear of one party working. Why should men prospect, when, for the money it would cost, they can buy a well-proved claim that may return the sum paid for it any morning? If it would calm the anxiety of home dealers, I could assure them that there is no likelihood of another New Rush for some months to come at any rate—not till that little kopje is all worked down to the bed rock, which may be a year hence, will wealthy men put themselves to the expense and trouble of seeking new fields. Even when that event takes place, it is much more probable that the greater part will turn their energies and ingenuity towards making Dutoitspan and Bultfontein workable, than towards prospecting the untried veldt. If large companies undertake the business of digging, they will be able in some measure to regulate the market. To large companies the enterprise must come at last, and it will not be, perhaps, to the ultimate disadvantage of the colony that it should do so. After all, diamond seeking, in the way it is now carried on, is but gambling for the mass of diggers. Goldseeking was not such a lottery. The diamond fever has depopulated every town in South Africa. House-rents are down two-thirds. The life and tone of these diggings is not the best education for young men; and I am almost inclined to think that the fields will have achieved all the good they could ever do this colony when they have rescued it from the bankruptcy that impended. This is almost, if not quite

Digitized by Google

effected already. The Government calculates upon a surplus of £200,000 in the next financial year. Wool also rises every mail. Upon this regular and unspeculative product of their country, colonists would do well to place their whole reliance; for, though this present panic will, I am sure, be transitory, it is not yet at its worst. A reasonable man, who had the means of informing himself accurately, could not doubt that the time is not far distant when diamond digging will cease to return the actual means of life to working men. Then, and not till then, the panic will cease. But it will remain to be discovered whether the distant fields as yet untouched, will not ultimately cause more dire confusion—though infinitely less distress—than our present workings have created.

* * * * *

June 18th, 1872.—The prophecy upon which I ventured in the last paragraph, is now fulfilled. Diamond digging no longer pays to the man who is dependent on his finds for the means of life. Our home market is in a delicate and anxious state, prices varying every week. New Rush has commenced to give out; Dutoitspan and Bultfontein are in such a state that active operations on the Companies' part cannot long be delayed; and no new kopje has been discovered in the neighbourhood.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

DRIVEN BACK.

Increasing activity of business men in the colony—A dust storm in Dutoitspan—Our Kaffirs run away—Our donkeys run away—Reports of intended action of the Commissioners—Grave irritation of the boer farmers—Monstrous stones found in Dutoitspan—Dinner off roast porcupine in a tornado—Endeavours to get a cart for Hopetown—Repeated disappointments—Borrow a "spider"—Driving down Bultfontein hill—Mr. Truter, late Free State Commissioner—His sentiments—Reach the Mod River—Find it impassable—The Drift canteen; its architecture, occupants, and business—Arrival of various parties—Mr. Truter tries the ford—Cooking our breakfast—Various excursions—The humours of the canteen—A flooded track—Astonishing effects of rain—Springboks—Our outhouse jumped by Tottie women—A second start—The Mod River ford fifty feet deep—Stoppage of the ferries at every point—Insulation of the camps—Continued agitation at New Rush—Suggestion of Vigilance Committees—Mr. Commissioner Thompson's conference with the diggers—His unanswerable arguments unanswerably refuted by force—Memorial to Sir H. Barkly—Another Hottentot maltreated.

JAN. 15, 1872.—I resume my daily diary of occurrences. Sold three weeks' find from my claim for £32. The Capetown people are beginning at last to understand that there is a handsome profit to be made out of 6 per cent. discount, and 17*s.* per cent. insurance of diamonds, not to mention other items of trade. The Cape of Good Hope bank has sent its cashier to establish an office at New Rush. All our Kaffirs bolted to-day. In the evening a dust storm raged over Dutoitspan. It is the commonest incident possible in this merry New Year time, but no habit can reconcile one to its recurrence. The day had been blazing hot, as usual;—the adjective is so common, and so untrue in a general

Digitized by Google

way, as to be reckoned vulgar, but it is descriptive here. There is a sort of aggressive heat on these fields. The sun does not shine in a friendly manner. It rages and blazes, and seems to delight in torturing poor people. We have no clouds on such a day as this. The sky is palely blue, with a lurid light on the horizon. Without warning or change of wind—we have at most times slight, faint, sultry gusts upon this hill—one quarter of the heaven suddenly hides itself in a dun red mist. The distant line of mountains is swallowed up; the horizon vanishes. Then shouts and yells ascend from every group of Kaffirs on the slope. They scream to one another in high metallic notes. They shout and laugh in chorus awhile, answering from mound to mound and claim to claim, from one end of the kopje to the other. Dutoitspan, three hundred yards away, takes up the cry, and gathering figures crowd its lofty hillocks. Another moment, and they are scattered, black men and white, all making for their fragile tenements, shrieking and swearing, and shrilly hallooing. The great dun cloud sweeps on, heralded by sharp, fierce lifts of wind. An instant more and it is on us, a furious tornado of grey dust. Tents fill, and wrench, and struggle at their cords, striving to break away. Men cling, shouting, to their strained tent-poles. They throw themselves on the ground, and grapple with the canvas, often to no avail. The bellying stuff breaks from them, and is whirled away, or snaps its pole and falls a struggling heap, or flies to ribbons in their hands. No man can help another. The area of one's vision is but a yard or two across, and beyond it are forms blurred and broken, like a picture smudged. The eyes are filled, and nose, and mouth, with poisonous dust that stings the flesh, so fiercely is it driven. The man overtaken before he has cleared the claims, scarce dares advance; for on every side are yawning holes, invisible until he stands on the very brink, where a sharper gust might cast him in. His coat is nigh turned inside out upon his shoulders if he face the storm, and if he show his back the wild wind drives him like a balloon. For ten minutes,

Digitized by Google

or twenty, such are the pictures shrouded in that whirling veil of dust. When the tempest passes, the sun shines mercilessly out again. Men begin, swearing, to repair their damage. Kaffirs reseek the claims, laughing cheerily. Such a sudden fury has raged across the scene while I write. It is past now. The door that banged and rattled on its lock five minutes since, as if to rive the lintel down, stands wide open without a tremor. The driving sand, that beat like rain upon the glass, has all passed by. Nothing is left to tell the tale save the thick layer of dust upon my papers, and the dusky, lurid fog driving fast towards the distant hills.

17*th.*—Our donkeys bolted from New Rush yesterday, and cannot be found. What a charming, easy pursuit is diamond digging! Bought a springbok, three shillings, whilst potatoes to-day are a shilling a pound. A fore-quarter of porcupine sent me as a present by the successful hunter. These animals are not very common hereabouts. They like the neighbourhood of gardens. But the one caught to-day is a monster, weighing 70 lbs. It severely injured two dogs, and the man has some ugly scratches. It is said that the Commissioners are about to introduce the colonial tax of 4 per cent. on all transfers of property. This mode of raising revenue would not, I think, be very unpopular. A curious rumour is current also to the effect that Government means to exact the strict letter of the old homestead law. By its action, all farmers on crown land are limited to an area of 3,000 *morgen*, or something above 6,000 acres, to be measured in a radius around the homestead. This proceeding would have the effect of excluding both New Rush and Old de Beers from the limit of Vooruitzicht farm.*

19*th.*—Two stones of one hundred and sixty-five carats and

* Neither of these reports was trustworthy, but the former project probably had engaged the attention of the Commissioners, and will be carried out ultimately. The latter I mention to show what rumours were afloat of a nature to exasperate landowners. This unfounded gossip roused downright fury amongst the boers.

Digitized by Google

ninety carats respectively found to-day at Dutoitspan. In the afternoon a hurricane, through which we made our way to dine with an Italian digger upon porcupine haunch. Five of us in a bell tent, six feet of diameter! The fire blown out and carried away; the tent pole bent like a whip, and the canvas bellowing, so that we could not hear each other speak; impossible to see five yards before one for the driving dust and grit. Porcupine haunch, I take it, would not be unwholesome for dogs. All the dishes confected with the famous skill of Signor C——, suffered from the inclemency of the weather. They resembled, some a mud pie, some a puddle. But the trail of the garlic was over them all, and a merry evening we had.

20th.—For three days past I have been endeavouring to hire a cart for Hopetown. A certain Kennedy thought he might manage to let me have one, but vanished without leaving a definite reply. Parkin then took up the negotiation, but changed his mind. Fourie was spoken with, but he forgot it. Finally, concluded an arrangement with Mr. Martin for the use of his spider cart and two horses, in exchange for my rifle and smooth-bore gun. But there is no harness belonging thereto, and all to-day has been occupied in hunting some for hire. Another public meeting on Dutoitspan, summoned no one knows by whom. Unanimously decided all over again that black men shall not dig. The Kaffir chief who attended on J. P. has hastily departed, one of his wives sending him a message that she is ill. One might have thought that after two years' absence he would have borne the news with some composure. Cha-ar-aarles's heart, however, is in the right place. He instantly packed up his boots and trousers, and set out upon a two months' tramp for his Zulu kraal. Hurricane all day—violent rain from time to time through the night.

21st.—Mr. Martin was more successful in getting harness, and sent me up the spider fully equipped at 5.30 A.M. Though not more conscious of nerves than most other men, I never drove down the hill of Bultfontein, behind fresh horses, without a sort

Digitized by Google

of wish-I-wasn't feeling—the road is so very narrow, and so cut about, the claims so very deep and crumbly. As we went on, the signs of a heavy rainfall grew more marked. Outspanned at Kommering's, and met there Mr. Truter, late civil commissioner of the Free State at Dutoitspan. This gentleman has a character which commends itself to the average digger, and in this respect he was well suited to his post. On the present occasion he chanced to be full of the rumour I lately referred to, touching the homestead law. His expressions on the subject I can only describe as rabid. Actual war he threatened, and the Kommering family nodded in approval. I had only enjoyed the advantage of meeting Mr. Truter once before, at the sale of his effects in Dutoitspan. It was perhaps only the "happy manner," for which he is famous, but I certainly thought he wanted to initiate the war by a hand-to-hand combat with myself. Declining to do battle at such an early hour, though in defence of our national honour, I briefly told him that I did not believe the report alluded to, and that, if true it was, the law was of his forefathers' making; and that those English subjects who should oppose force to the Government ran the risk of their necks; and so "quitted."

The country beyond Kommering's was actually under water. We had no longer any doubt that the Mod River would be found impassable. The *drift* about 10 A.M. Alighting to examine the ford, I met two ex-officers of the English army who had just ridden across. The water was up to their saddle flaps. It was still just passable for us, at some little risk, but as the flood seemed to be rapidly falling, I turned into the little canteen at the top of the drift. This is a structure built on unusual principles. Its walls are of corrugated iron, and its roof canvas. If the builder had it in view to test the merit of ordinary rules in architecture, I hope to heaven he visited it that day. The canteen was kept by an ex-soldier of the Confederate army, a Texan, mad against all Yankees. He had a lively time dodging the rain last

Digitized by Google

night. The inside of the place was over shoetops in mud. Nothing kept dry but the bottles, on which indeed the labels had "run." It was the poorest of little shanties at the best, but some hundreds of pounds might have been invested in its stock of cottons, cutlery, and "notions." The inevitable Mr. Sonnenberg owned the place at this time. Nothing too large or small for this Californian shopman. There was just room inside for a counter, a bed, a big chest of biscuits, and a half-dozen people to drink—all standing. Presently entered Mr. Truter and three friends. Then I thought the place must be full. There was nothing to eat but sodden biscuits. Going down to try the ford, I found it had ceased falling. Returned, to find another party crowding in. With ten of us round the bar, and perched upon the heap of fodder ranged along one side, I thought there could be room not even for a cat. The two English officers, having fed their horses, came in. One of them had been leading the wild hunter's life seven years, and entertained no thought of returning. The second was a beginner, of three years' standing only. We sat and talked of the American war and other matters. The Texan drew such a picture of his native land, its game, its Indians, and other delights, that the English officers came to the immediate resolve to go thither when they should become tired of South Africa. They then departed, without leaving any apparent vacuum in the crowd. Mr. Truter and his friends found a fishing-rod, and went out to fish. Then a deluge of rain descended, which fairly sang in the wind. Enter the proprietor, Mr. Sonnenberg, with another party. We closed the door and nibbled biscuits. A rush, a bang, a draught of rain, and uproarious mirth heralded the return of Mr. Truter and his party, clothed only in a small white fish, which the late civil commissioner held aloft by the tail. A black fellow bore their clothes after them.

We were now fifteen in the shanty, and spouts of rain descending on us from the roof. Mr. Truter summed up the case of the Free State *versus* England in the space of time required for

Digitized by Google

combing his hair. Never was anything simpler, except perhaps a garotte robbery. The gentleman has so often stated the affair, he has been able to reduce it to a mere syllogism in Barbara. No one undertook to refute him, and the matter dropped. Then a charitable person produced some beefsteaks. Oh, how eagerly we seized upon them! After many efforts, a fire was lit, and a frying-pan borrowed from one of the waggons which began to assemble. We had no plates, but dusted the chest as well as might be, and ate our dinner upon it. More rain, and the river six feet deep at the bank. A very fat man entered with a party. For all the deluge pouring down, there was no water to drink. A Scotch gentleman insisted upon having water with his brandy. He said it was as clearly the duty of a barkeeper to have water at hand as to have liquor. Words ran high, and might have come to facts, had the Texan and Scotchman been able to reach one another. Fortunately, we were packed so tight neither could move. Somebody asked for a pack of cards, but this suggestion was instantly negatived by Mr. Truter, who, deprived of his commissionership, is nothing if not virtuous. Two black fellows came to the door, asking for six penn'orth of biscuits, which was given them. They complained that they were rotten, and spoke the strictest truth. Having recovered their money, they asked to take it out in drink, when the barkeeper, who was near the door, suddenly seized a stick and rushed upon them, whilst they fled with winged steps.

At 3.30 P.M. the case was evidently hopeless, so I harnessed up and set out on the back trail. Rushes of rain swept across the veldt, which was in most parts a sheet of water. The road, being worn something deeper than the surrounding soil, held the flood. In parts it was two feet deep. On every slope a cataract descended, washing the soil away to the bottom rock. Every small sloot was full to bursting. Some of the intersecting drains are ten feet deep, and as many wide, and each lesser channel pours into them. The noise in places was deafening. A sheet of water, twenty yards

Digitized by Google

across, pitched down into the sloot, which itself roared furiously, and tore down fragments of the lofty bank. It is only by the sight of such inundations that one can understand the cause of nature's aspect in this continent. The sandy soil throws off its drainage with hostility. The water which might clothe these plains in verdure pours away within two hours. Not a sign of to-day's flood will be visible to-morrow, excepting in the sudden greenness of the veldt. In no country are reservoirs so much needed, and in none is the making of them such a simple process.

Droves of springbok had come down upon Alexandersfontein, and they stood grazing within three hundred yards of the road-side. I fired two or three shots, but missed them as usual. Found on reaching Bultfontein that a colony of Hottentot women had seized possession of our "*hartebeest's* hut." They said it was empty and jumpable. With some difficulty—connected with a horsewhip—we turned out the filthy crew, a proceeding so repugnant to the chivalry of our "boys" that they deserted in company of the fair ones. N.B. The "*hartebeest's* hut" is a colonial name for an outhouse or stable.

22nd.—A small disturbance in the camp about impounding cattle. There is an idea abroad that no poundmaster has the right of taking up cattle upon the farm on which his pound is situate. I am informed that is a misconception, but the trouble has been allayed by a promise that henceforth stray cattle at Alexandersfontein shall be sent to New Rush pound.

23rd.—Started again at five A.M., in the spider, on that familiar road I begin to abominate. I know every bush on its monotonous course, every springbok that bounds away at our approach, every sloot and rut and bump upon it. At a mile and a half distance from the Mod River it was seen to be impassable. We could not believe our eyes when they showed the chasm flush full with tearing, foaming, roaring water. We drove on to the bank. Not five feet below the flood raced by. Trees sixty feet in height had scarce a twig above the furious current. I stared in silence

Digitized by Google

at the scene. This spot was a ford three days ago! Over it one could walk and scarcely wet one's boot-tops. Now, from bank to bank was a waste of seething water, two hundred feet wide, fifty deep, turbid with earth washed down, rolling great logs about and shapeless wrecks of plunder. On either shore a little group of waggons was drawn up. The people in them had lit fires and camped, laboriously pitched the waggon canvas for a tent, and made preparations for an indefinite stay. They shouted to each other across the flood, and exchanged inaudible comfort and denunciations through the roaring of its swirl. No hope had any there of crossing this once paltry stream for a week to come; and so, after an hour's halt at the canteen, I inspanned and came home again. We are now surrounded by water, and threaten to be cut off from all intercourse with the world. The pont at Klipdrift has ceased to ply, its guiding ropes having parted, though it would not greatly have assisted us in any event. The pont on this Mod River went down yesterday, not without some loss of life. The little boat belonging to the drift canteen was carried away on Sunday night. There is actually no means of reaching Hopetown and the colony unless across the pont at Klipdrift, and through the river diggings to the junction of the Vaal and Orange. By this route I am resolved to go, when I can hear that the Klipdrift pont has resumed working. The passengers who had intended to catch the mail of Feb. 4th are all too late.

24th.—Went to New Rush. There is a great deal of angry agitation here. The diggers accuse several persons of the unpardonable offence—buying diamonds from a black man. They openly declare the intention of burning down the tents of those suspected. A vigilance committee is proposed and will be organized, to patrol the veldt and intercept returning Kaffirs. Mr. Commissioner Thompson held a conference with the discontented to-day. After hearing their complaints, which, in so far as they did not refer to the incapacity of subordinates, and the residence and policy imposed upon our officials, might be summed up in the

Digitized by Google

great "black grievance,"—Mr. Thompson told the meeting some home truths. As to the inefficiency of the police, that would speedily be remedied. The inspectors of roads were not able to carry out all they could wish, owing to the reckless opposition of the diggers themselves. The post was now much improved, and the Cape government had it earnestly in debate how it could best improve the communications. But in regard to steps which should be taken for preventing theft by Kaffirs, Mr. Thompson suggested that owners themselves should make just one little effort to guard their own property,—that they should superintend their claims, nor leave the blacks in charge from dawn till sunset. He asked how long it had been supposed the business of Government to look after men's private affairs with a view to preventing their servants cheating them? These remarks did not prove palatable, but none could answer them. As to permitting coloured men to dig, Mr. Thompson asked where they would have him draw the line? There were coloured men in every rank, and of all degrees of wealth. Waterboer himself was coloured, and nine-tenths of his *raad* were black. Could any man propose such an ungrateful—such an unheard-of rule as would exclude from the ground just presented to England in free gift the very givers themselves? It was not to the point to urge that Griquas do not come to work at diamond-digging. They do not come, indeed, because the greater part of them are men of some little substance, which renders manual labour unnecessary, and implants a feeling of pride. As a matter of fact, there were many Griquas in the less frequented of the river diggings. Finally, Mr. Thompson was compelled to "put his foot down." He said that no English law would allow distinctions to be drawn between a subject of one colour and a subject of another; that digging must be free for black and white; that he heard many stories of Kaffir theft, but wished to see a few of them proved; that if any man *could* prove dishonesty, there were the courts open to him, and English law would be found

Digitized by Google

equal to the occasion. But as to superintending the interests and property of those who would not take the trouble to superintend, from such an absurd duty the police must be absolved. With all this argument, which was excellently put, unprejudiced men must agree. But I cannot help remarking that English law has been found so far pliable as to draw distinctions of colour. In every colony it does so, and must do, in the interest of the blacks themselves. It is but a few weeks since our own logical commissioners passed an edict that no canteen-keeper should supply a coloured servant with liquor, unless on a written authority from his master. Since the time of which I write, coloured, or at least black men have been forbidden to loaf about the streets after nine at night. Other instances one might give by the score. I mention them only to show that Mr. Thompson, in his admirable argument, went too far a little.

And yet, for all this logic, I am satisfied that some rule such as the crowd desire, must ultimately be passed. *Salus populi suprema lex.* Our rule up here must be a compromise for months or years to come. We have not force to uphold an unpopular law. Nothing is more certain than the recurrence of the late disturbances, perhaps much aggravated, if the Commissioners insist upon granting equal rights to all as the result of this conference.

Need I say that the New Rush diggers were not convinced a bit, and that straightway the most influential of them adjourned to devise the Vigilance Committee scheme.

25*th.*—A memorial to Sir Henry Barkly was drafted last night, complaining of police inefficiency, the residence of the Commissioners at Klipdrift, and the neglect of measures to prevent Kaffir-stealing of diamonds. All yesterday I was employed seeking a guide for the route between this and the Hook. Went to New Rush, after a certain Dirk George, a great scoundrel, I believe, but shrewd and experienced. I find that a Hottentot was nearly hung yesterday for the alleged offence of stealing diamonds. They put a rope round his neck, and started for the tree at Old de Beers to

Digitized by Google

string him up. A number of influential diggers interfered; and the argument of hanging or no hanging went on for an hour, whilst the wretch stood with the noose about his neck. The great majority of an immense crowd voted Yes! with phrensy; but the aggrieved person—if aggrieved any one was—finally consented to take it out of him with a tremendous flogging, and then send him for trial before the magistrate. This was done Some leading gentlemen of New Rush dined with us to-night. Mr. Fry and I endeavoured, not to justify, for that would have been too insulting, but gently to explain the principles on which, as we conceived, Government might be acting in its refusal to hang and flog on bare suspicion of a theft unascertained. The result was such a sparkle and blaze up as all the diamonds of the Colesberg kopje could not have shown. Resolved to take one of the bricklayer's men of Alexandersfontein with me as far as Klipdrift.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX.

LOST ON THE VELDT.

A third start—Pniel—Jardine's in desolation—Extraordinary ideas of the sub-inspector of Pniel—He carries them out—Discovery of a new digging on the river—My man George and his black brother—Gong-Gong—Delightful digging—A trader on the *trek*—Manner of seeking diamonds on the river—Returns of river digging compared with dry—I lose myself between Gong-Gong and Delport's Hope—How it happened—Reach Jantje's kraal—Offensive Kaffirs—The *Tompan*—A wretched awakening—Batlapin Christianity—Start again in a deluge—Meet a colony of Griquas—Their kindness—The veldt under water—A village of giants—The second night of our adventure—All the land a flood—Our horses give out—Another Batlapin village—The back trail stopped—The third night—Camping in a swamp, between rain and water—Provisions give out—Suffer from thirst—Catch sight of Campbell clearing far below—Mr. Bartlett's hospitality—The ruins of Kornelis Kok's great house—Mr. Bartlett's evidence—Both parties shirk an appeal to Adam Kok—A lovely spring—Leave Campbell—My spider breaks twice—Reach the Hook and cross over to Mr. Gers's.

The Hook, Jan. 31, 1872.

ON Friday, Jan. 26th, I inspanned for the third time. It was raining as I stepped through the door of Bultfontein House, the last mortal probably who would use that historic portal; for the changes which have metamorphosed "The Residence" were approaching conclusion. My carbolic chamber is now the entrance hall; the old door is a window. We boast three bedrooms and a sitting-room. The roof is made water-tight; luxury prevails throughout, so far as whitewash of the highest class can be made to go. All the furniture of our new apartments is a hammock and two sorting

Digitized by Google

tables; but with good will these supply all the wants of life. May the dwellers in that renovated mansion enjoy as merry and as social times as did we in the ancient barrack.

Reached Pniel in safety. At the new Half-way House, which seems to be doing the briskest possible business, the owner told me a grievance which really appears genuine. A black transport rider, going homeward with his team, came in at ten o'clock the other night, drenched to the skin. In common charity the bar-keeper might have given him a drink, but the man had plenty of money, and he paid for it. The opposition canteen on the hill beyond heard of the circumstance, and lodged an information under the Act I have referred to. Mr. Giddy imposed a fine, and ordered my host's license to be withdrawn. We are not used to hearing complaints of Mr. Giddy's judgments, but mistakes will arise. I gave the man a card for Mr. Commissioner Thompson, who is staying with us at Bultfontein. The matter was put right, and I only allude to it as showing how impossible it is to draw hard and fast lines in class legislation. It amused me to observe the throng round this new Half-way House. The "original hotel and bar" stands within sight. Its owner once laughed at the idea of a new-comer getting custom. "There isn't a man on the diggings," he said to me, "as won't follow old C—— anywhere; they tell me so every minute of the day over this bar." But they haven't followed him, even up the hill. I fear that friendly promises are not better kept in South Africa than elsewhere.

Jardine's chanced that night to be almost empty; and a melancholy house is this when all the casks, and hams and cheeses, saddles, salt meats, tin pots and "cradles," ready-made clothes, bags of biscuit, boots, ropes, buckets, and sundries, all are exposed in their ugly nakedness, nor are masked by moving groups. Met the sub-inspector of Pniel, an old London acquaintance. He astonished me much by remarking casually that a "confounded old Dutchman had found a diamond twenty-five miles away, and he must ride over at dawn to open the digging." I asked under

Digitized by Google

what clause of the proclamation this proceeding became necessary? He said it was established as law, and that on a previous occasion of the like sort he had asked Mr. Campbell, who had plainly directed him to "open the digging." This ceremony, it appears, consists in verifying the discovery of a diamond, and then and there inviting all the world to come and dig. I thought at first that Mr. W. was trying to hoax me, but he grew quite warm upon my laughter, and next day he actually departed, under Mr. Campbell's authority, I presume, to perform this astonishing function.

Jardine's was dreary indeed; the dogs howled in a concert of thousands. But four visitors were in the hotel, one a lady, and these played the most melancholy rubber I ever saw, in the dining-room. The waiters, bare-armed, unkempt, unwashed, clad in flannel and corduroy, sat at one end of the horseshoe table, I at another, reading, and the whist party in the middle. The hospitable but naked plank walls were lit up by two candles hung aloft. I retired to the society of the fleas at an early hour, to be wakened at intervals by the inrush of gentlemen from festive scenes. Pniel doesn't keep early hours—at least, its visitors do not.

Crossed to Klipdrift next day, paying *7s. 6d.* for the ferry of my spider and horses. It is impossible to find a guide here, but they tell me I cannot lose my way as far as Delport's Hope. Laid in a stock of loaves, *1s.* each, a Dutch cheese *25s.*, and a fine water melon *4s.* Whilst in the store, a gentleman entered with one of the finest gems I have seen. It was as perfect in shape as the ace of diamonds, clear as glass and without flaw, not what we call very large here, though such a find would have been a year's wonder in Brazil; it weighed seventeen and a half carats. A boer washed it out last night, in a new spot. He had been working six months without one gleam of success. His agent asked £500, but the highest offer was £275. Finally, Mr. Myers advanced £300 upon security of the stone, its owner

Digitized by Google

being a substantial man. British titles are in course of preparation for Pniel and Klipdrift, and then the occupiers of land will be obliged to pay rent, which hitherto they have escaped. Saw sixty horses swum across the swollen river, a striking sight. A drove of oxen followed without accident. The man I have hired from Alexandersfontein, George by name, is coloured—mulatto that is. A jet black nigger, who assisted him to inspan, did not fail to let me know that he was George's brother,—"My own brudder, *baas!*" he said; a palpable falsehood. A mother's fair repute is not considered to be slurred by such little accidents as this, nor, indeed, by any greater misfortune. George did not appear so enthusiastic about the relationship, perhaps because he is a mission boy, and carries a hymn-book in his pocket; perhaps because his brother is so very black.

Starting at 10.15 A.M., reached Gong-Gong at 12.15 P.M. At sight of this charming spot, one ceased to wonder that diamond digging has fascinated all the population of the colony. Up yonder, at Dutoitspan, the search is carried on under every drawback of discomfort and ugliness. It is the hardest of labour, unredeemed by any charm of the surroundings. Very, very different is the scene at these older diggings on the river. The work may be even more laborious, and there are not, probably, even such conveniences of living as we have now inland. If the shaft-sinking be absent here, with the constant danger attendant upon it, there is, on the other hand, heavier work and an almost greater risk in the wet and exposure. But Gong-Gong is a spot as lovely as will anywhere be found. The river bank is clothed in tall willow trees. Thickets of mimosa and other thorns, most brilliantly green, form an undergrowth almost impassable. Here and there the thick springing bushes fall back, and a grassy glade intervenes, surrounded with dense foliage. A rapid, below, makes perpetual murmur on the ear. Leaves gently flutter in the wind, and chequers of sunlight come and go. Beneath the trees, in little unexpected clearings, arranged without order, but following

Digitized by Google

each man's fancy, stand the tents. They come upon one suddenly; small neat dwellings of canvas, with the cradle and sieve before them, and the housewife sorting at the sheltered table. The men are carrying loads of pebbles from the river side, by devious paths amongst the brushwood, their clothes dripping as they go. There is a sound of children's voices everywhere, calling to one another and laughing, as they play in the sunny thickets. No wonder people left their dreary homes upon the veldt, or offices in a lifeless town, to risk the chance of fortune in a spot so free and lovely. At one point, prying around—with such delight in trees and grass as only two months' stay on the "dry fields" can give a man—I came upon the quaintest scene. In the centre of a glade, just above the rapid, stood a handsome tent, with double roof, or "fly," so called, and tables and chairs within. Beside it was a waggon, its panels painted with illustrations of hunting and savage war. Here the artist had depicted, with the rudest brush, the wounded lion at bay. There, stood the rhinoceros about to charge. There, again, the elephant, the giraffe, the wild buffalo, the antelope, in characteristic attitudes. Between the pictures a warrior had his place, in full array, threatening, fighting, or standing proudly upon view. Tent and waggon were empty, but down on the river brink the owners sat "sorting," round their table. The quivering leaves flecked their dwelling with swift flashes of sunlight. A motion of some bushes drew my eyes to the right; above the hidden fence an ostrich was staring at me with round bright eyes. I approached, and found three more of the monstrous birds stalking about their little paddock, with that restless and stupid air that belongs to them. I had come across a trader, treking homeward from the far inland country with the spoils of barbaric wealth. He lightened the fatigue of his journey by a little diamond washing.

The mode of searching at the river camps is entirely different from that practised on the dry diggings. I extract the following

Digitized by Google

account from Mr. Dunn's "Notes on the Diamond Fields," a pamphlet which is entirely to be relied upon in respect of its statements upon this subject. "The operation," he says, "consists in excavating the boulders and pebbles. The boulders are piled up, but the pebbles are put through a coarse sieve or grating. Everything over two-thirds of an inch in diameter being thrown aside as refuse (any diamond of this size would readily catch the eye), the finer portion is either taken by cart, barrow, or bucket to the edge of the river, and washed in a cradle, a machine the simplest form of which is a box with rockers underneath; on the top, and fitting one into the other, are two, or sometimes three, sieves or hoppers, with different meshes, the finest having eight holes to the inch, placed at the bottom. These hoppers are made of perforated zinc, or wire, the latter being preferable. The gravel to be washed is put into the top sieve, water poured on, and the cradle worked backward and forward by a long handle standing up vertically from the back of it. The water passes through the different sieves, taking with it all the particles smaller than the mesh; the very fine material passes away at the bottom. When sufficiently washed, the remaining gravel in the different sieves is placed on a table, at which the sorter is seated. With river drift it is usual to sort in the shade, as so many wet bright stones are apt to dazzle the eyes. In sorting, a piece of thin sheet iron or a knife is used; a small quantity of washed drift is scattered by the scaper over the board, and then scraped off,—or the residue from the coarse sieve is placed in a cylinder, covered with wire or perforated zinc (about eight holes to the inch). By means of a simple contrivance, a part of the cylinder opens and closes tightly. Through the ends of the cylinder an axle is inserted, with a handle on one end; the cylinder is placed with the ends of the axle on opposite sides of a tub containing water; gravel put in, the handle turned, and all fine material and sand worked through the perforations. After a few turns in the first tub, it is placed in a second con-

Digitized by Google

taining cleaner water, and with a few turns more is ready for the sorting table. By this latter plan, a little water can be made to serve for a long time, and it saves the labour of carrying the diamond drift to the river."

I made inquiries upon the spot as to the success of river diggers. Up at Dutoitspan we are used to think contemptuously of Gong-Gong and those little settlements. We believe we have got a long way ahead of such benighted people. They represent the infancy of our great adventure. But I am not sure this contempt is merited. Certes, they have not here any of those wondrous pockets which turn out a handful of gems *per diem;* but how many of such are there, after all? They exist, but one might count the lucky holders on one's hand. After some experience one comes to doubt, not the fact of such riches, but the inference that might be drawn from it. I have met with no one yet, not even amongst the old and enthusiastic diggers, who believes that any single man has sorted out £10,000 worth of diamonds upon the fields—excepting those half-dozen, whose names are in every one's mouth. Several claims may be believed to have yielded that amount twice over, but not to one individual. And many persons have made more than the sum, but not at simple digging. They have speculated in claims, forestalled the market, or traded with their profit. Again, the second holder of such claim, at Dutoitspan or New Rush, has a big sum invested—£500 or £1,000 only represents the value of a quarter in such nests of wealth. I never heard of a whole claim bought after it had earned renown. Probably £5,000 would be laughed at by Mr. Bantje, Mr. R——s, Mr. B——e, or the other Leviathans. A quarter or a half they will let go cheap, £500 to £1,500, having many profitable uses for ready coin, but the whole is not to be purchased. A heavy sum, then, must be recovered before the ground begins to pay. The finds, too, though numerous and gigantic, are second-rate of quality. It is not thus at Gong-Gong. No monstrous sum to pay there for a space of land

Digitized by Google

scarce big enough to make one's grave. A strip of canvas and a packing-needle, a sieve, a cradle, and a sorting board supply the digger's stock in trade. He is not afraid of fever, nor is rheumatism so severe as might be expected. The stones he picks up, if not many, are, probably, first-class. Should he find a large one, the chances still are that he finds a fortune.

It had been believed that the wet diggings were worn out, but there is every sign that the rush inland was precipitate, so far as this reason goes. Of late, the yields from the river have increased. Men are gradually filling claims which had been deserted for months. And new discoveries are made, as in the two instances I have mentioned as coming under my notice at Klipdrift. From what I hear and see, I am inclined to believe that a poor man—one who cannot afford to buy a claim proved wealthy—runs a better chance of making money on these river diggings than on the fields. And if—a supposition these hard-working and prosy fellows would not for one moment entertain—if it be a point worth consideration to earn one's daily bread in scenes of pleasantness and beauty, the Gong-Gong people and their like have an advantage beyond computation.

I left this pretty spot with the intention of visiting Delport's Hope, Sievenells, and Backhouse, thence hither. I did not reach any of these secluded haunts. From the moment my spider cart emerged from the peaceful shade of Gong-Gong, I might be considered as no better than one lost. Whither my devious steps conducted me, in what unknown quarter of the world I sojourned—these are questions my kind hosts to-night discuss with much interest and some warmth. I sit beside, and ask instruction silently. All I can tell is the one simple fact, that I never reached Delport's Hope, but came out once more in the sight of men at Campbell, two days after leaving Gong-Gong. I should greatly like to know where is this haven that I gained; but there is no map here, and my own is utterly reduced to pulp by the incessant rains. The reader must be content to know

Digitized by Google

that this little incident deprived him of hearing all about the other river washings. In choosing this route, I had been greatly influenced by the desire to examine those camps. I must attempt instead some weak and faint description of a man's adventures when lost in the South African veldt.

I have been so terrified before in either hemisphere. It is awful to be alone and hopeless in the great forests of the tropic. With the agony of that feeling my experiences of this week will not compare, but the actual danger is as great upon these naked plains as beneath the sunflect shadow of the trees. The means of life, actual food to eat, are as rare in one situation as in the other; but the fear of thirst is not amongst the horrors that beset the lost one in the tropics. Here, the want of water is the foremost peril. Let me tell my story as it took place:—I left Gong-Gong by a well-beaten track, which led straight, as they assured me, down the banks of the Vaal. In a short time we emerged from the pretty dale, and came upon the old waste plains to which the Cape traveller so soon gets used. Sometimes they are dotted and sprinkled, more or less thickly, with low trees, and gnarled grey bushes, all of them bearing twisted thorns. In such parts the sandy earth is strewn with sharp-edged stones and fragments of red, burnt rock. There is little or no ground vegetation. A tuft of hard grass, six inches tall, and parched to the dryness of hay, crops up at yard-wide distances. A clump of sage is equally common and equally rare. Here and there is a scrubby aloe, or the broad, flat head of a bulbous plant. Of sterile *cacti* there are a few, and a pale species of *cereus*. In these parts the road, fast roughening, is terrible to our horses' unshod feet. They already begin to limp. By-and-by we enter on a broad, bare upland, covered with deep, red, sandy soil, bearing a miserable crop of grass and burnt-up bushes. Here the cart sinks deep, and the horses labour to draw it through. With such alternations of misery to them the road winds on. It begins to rain; at first a fine, misty drizzle, and then a deluge. We descry a big native

Digitized by Google

village on the right, and recognise it as "Jantje's kraal." It consists of some forty huts, built upon the crest of a precipitous hill. Thither we wend our dreary way, resolved to go no further, for the night is coming on. Crossing a ravine, some twenty feet deep, which has already a rivulet at the bottom, we climb the hill and ask a slouching Kaffir where is Jantje. He points out a little group of huts near by, and we creep thither along the slope. The transverse train upon my spider is too great for that fragile vehicle—we are at an angle of some thirty degrees crosswise—and the bar, to which the pole is fixed, breaks asunder; I have no idea what the proper name of this machinery may be, and no one here can tell me, either in Dutch or English. This brings us to a stop. After some delay and negotiation—during which I stand amidst the pouring rain, keeping a sharp eye upon most rude and suspicious Kaffirs who crowd round—an empty hut is assigned to us. There is no food to be had for love or money, and we pay sixpence a bottle for water. Fortunately, we have a loaf and a cheese; on these we sup, and turn in, teased and worried by a throng of insolent blacks, headed by the younger son of Jantje, a most offensive fellow. Oh, the world of insects in that hut! I had thought myself acquainted with all pests that walk by night, but this journey introduced me to the very king and tyrant of the obscene realm. He is called the *tompan*. He dwelleth in empty houses. His empire is the floor, over which he stalketh at midnight, seeking whom he may devour. I have wrestled with *garrapatas* in Mexico; I have slain jiggers in the West Indies; I have fought with ticks in Borneo; fleas in Egypt; and l—e in wild Sardinia. These are nought. The tompan will give them half his armoury of daggers, and beat them badly. In shape he is flat, about the size of a threepenny piece and under. He has many legs. His courage approaches ferocity, and his vengeance is terrible. No head in particular doth he bear; it is all merged and lost in a great bundle of swords. This monstrous snout he inserts into your person, and sucks and kicks, and

Digitized by Google

prods and pumps, until his whole flat carcase is distended with your life blood. This hut of Jantje's, I should think, was the headquarters of the emperor, his capital, and chosen dwelling-place. His hosts were not to be numbered by suffering man. They raced and scurried, as to a rendezvous, upon my body. They gave dinner parties, and entertained their friends hospitably, and fought afterwards. Meanwhile, I toiled in chace. To catch the festive reptiles was easy, but to crush their shell-like bodies impossible. I could but hurl them from me, and I fear the cast-aways descended on my faithful boy like hail. He cared no more for the rattling storm than for the drippings of the rain without. They lighted upon him, and tried the soil, and found it worthless. At all the speed of their many legs, a fell instinct brought them back, swollen with appetite and vengeance. I gave up at length an unequal struggle. Unresisting did I yield myself to the deadly onslaught.

We woke to a drizzling and clouded dawn. Our poor horses had had no provender, save such as they could pick upon the hard hill side, and they also might have been glad to get away from that inhospitable village. All the evening through, and at the early hour we started, Jantje's people had been singing hymns, and praying loud, and glorifying their Christianity. Had the missionaries taught them some faint rudiments of charity and kindliness, they had done better perhaps for the interests of the poor savages. I would not have my readers confound these rude and insolent people with the Basuto and Zulu Kaffirs I have mentioned elsewhere. Jantje belongs to the bastard tribe called the Batlapins, a feeble and useless race, equal neither to the courage of savagery, nor to the decencies of civilisation. Though it rained cats and dogs, we left them with pleasure. Their reception was more inhospitable, and their customs almost as filthy, as those of the boers themselves. We had bound up the broken bar with a halter, and progressed some way in safety through the driving rain. After about an hour's slow progress,

Digitized by Google

along a road which could only be distinguished by the depth and violence of the stream within it—for all the country was under water—one of the iron braces holding the *dussel-boom* split in two pieces. We bound it up with a second halter, and proceeded miserably. There was not a thing eatable in our cart, nor for miles around. The dreary scene was just what I have described, thorny plain alternately, and sloppy waste. Between each changed prospect ran a sloot, or sudden, steep watercourse, now a muddy torrent two feet deep. No sign of cultivation was there all about, but we passed two or three Kaffir villages lying back from the roadside. About two o'clock, being desperately hungry, we came upon a family of Griquas on the trek, moving towards Klipdrift, with their herds, their sheep, and goats, and even their poultry. From them I bought a kid for three shillings, caught and killed upon the spot. The elder matron stewed its inside for me, and I might greatly have enjoyed the dish had it not been prepared before my eyes. On this subject, however, let us be silent; for surely these poor people were as kind as they could be. At this moment I began to suspect that we might be lost. The ideas we had of our intended route could no way be reconciled with the report they gave. Delport's Hope I abandoned, and proposed to strike the river at Sievenells, to which, as we were assured, our present road must infallibly lead us. After breakfast, we went on, carrying the hind legs of our goat. The rain had never ceased. We had already been wet through twenty-four hours, and were not to dry for as many hours more. Our grog was all drunk, and every grain of tobacco smoked. Then the horses gave out entirely, and we had to loose them awhile. I beguiled the miserable time with diamond seeking amongst the rocks, in such a downpour as never lasts fifteen minutes at home. In the evening came to a kraal of Griquas, but dwelling under the domination of the Batlapin chief. I never saw such mighty men as were these. Not a fellow in the village less than six feet high, and all had limbs like Philistines. Most

Digitized by Google

hospitable and friendly they were, though all the food they seemed to own was salt. They lived not by herds or by agriculture, but by carting reeds to Dutoitspan. I was curious to know, but could not discover, how they kept life in them before the fields were peopled. At night we had prayers and singing again; mighty small allowance of the former, but the chorus *ad libitum*. I should think they sang one hymn ten times over, or it must have been as long as the *niebelungen leid*. The tompans marked us for their own when night fell.

Rain still, and again next day—rain always! The country was a moving sheet of water. We climbed the rolling hills against a torrent, passed a very water-shed upon the crown, and descended with a downward stream. Presently we came to another large kraal, the last. To reach it we drove through a mighty sloot, already full to the axletree. Whilst resting the footsore horses in the village, a roaring noise became audible. No need to ask what it was. That deep ravine through which we had lately come was now a river, nothing less, twenty feet deep and thirty broad. No going back now. We pushed on after awhile, and crept along through a miniature forest of grey bushes, till night; then camped out and slept, under a deluge. But there were, at least, no tompans on the veldt. At dawn we ate the last of our kid, broiled in the ashes of last night's fire, and pushed along. Our horses could scarce put one leg before the other. They shrank from the jagged stones as from hot iron. We were now seriously alarmed. One of our poor cattle had refused to drink the night before, and of all the flood that had descended not a drop could be found in any hollow two hours after sunrise. It had run off in great waves seawards. With worn-out horses, a broken cart, no help within twenty hours travel, no food, and not a drop to drink—we really looked at the prospect with anxiety. I walked ahead, to lighten the cart, and easily gained ground. Several times we had debated the question of returning. At length, when I had actually made up my mind to risk the back trail, I caught sight of something

Digitized by Google

like cleared land, lying far below, at the mouth of a gorge. At any risk we directed our course that way, and at length, after two hours' climbing and descending, came out on the farm of Campbell.

Here ended our devious wanderings. The Englishman who lives on the spot proved to be most kind and hospitable. He dwells on a clearing of no small interest, historically, to Cape colonists. That big, ruined house was the dwelling of Kornelis Kok, the chief whose claims, whose rights and wrongs, whose omissions and commissions, whose acts, proceedings, and intentions, are at the bottom of England's last "little difficulty"—that with the Free State. Here he dwelt, as President Brand contends, a powerful and independent chieftain; as Sir Henry Barkly has it, a subordinate officer of Waterboer. In the meadow below, where lines of fig-trees and pomegranates mark the ancient limits of a garden, did he assemble his Griqua subjects, and solemnly surrender his lands and rank to young Adam Kok, his nephew. My host shows me the spot where he saw the old chief stand, on an October day, 1855, absolving his black people from their allegiance. He told them he was old, and unable longer to ride about his wide domains. He said that complaints came in daily from the boers, of thefts and violence committed by his subjects. They were reminded how dangerous it was to provoke the covetous Dutch farmers, whose appetite for land was unappeasable. Therefore, confessing his inability to rule in such troublous times, he had surrendered the sovereignty to younger hands. Henceforth, his nephew, Adam Kok, before their eyes now, was chief of Campbell as well as Philippolis; and he called on every man to obey him. According to my host, there could be no doubt at all of the absolute independence of Kornelis Kok, nor of his cession of that independent sovereignty to Adam. Beyond this fact, which he himself had seen, he was not inclined to discuss the merits of the dispute. The Griquas of the place, Mr. Bartlett alleges, consider themselves subject to Adam Kok,

Digitized by Google

and none of them pleaded against his authority when summoned to trek after him to Nomansland. This was the account given me by Mr. Bartlett, the son of the late missionary here. The advocates of the Waterboer's claim dispute most of his facts, and all his inferences, as I have before explained. They assert that the scene above described never took place, and that Adam Kok claims no authority over Campbell Griquas, excepting such as are mere emigrants from his own town of Philippolis. Why on earth don't these "argufiers" ask one or two simple questions of Adam Kok himself? Nomansland is not very far.

After viewing the ruinous house of stone in which dwelt the mythical chieftain, I asked how such a strong and indeed handsome edifice had come to destruction. My host explained that Kornelis Kok's family had wantonly sacked it. Surprised to hear such frank allusions to his sons and daughters—who are strongly insisted on in the English case—I inquired how it came about that the chief had not left his political power to his eldest son. Mr. Bartlett replied that Kornelis was too patriotic to do so; that the Griqua law did not recognise hereditary transmission of the chieftainship as anything more than a convenience; and that several instances of such irregular succession could be at this moment shown amongst the heads of the Griqua and Coranna nations. If this be so, a point is cut from the negative argument on which General Hay relied. The English case, as a whole, however, rests upon firmer bases.

I was then taken to visit the widow of the missionary who converted the natives of this part. The worthy old dame, though unable to speak English, received me with great kindness, and produced some delicious peaches. Then I took the opportunity to withdraw for bathing purposes. Directed by a young English giant who was sawing planks in a pit, I found my way to a spring. Such a limpid verdant fountain!—that of Bandusia, sung by Horace in an immortal strain, had not more glassy waters. Above the further bank tall stalks of maize hung out their purple tassels.

Digitized by Google

A glossy thicket of pomegranate dipped dark leaves to the current, and hid its course some yards below. Thick-growing water-plants concealed the snowy channel, save where a space was left to fill the household bucket. No marble whiter than the sand in this small gap. Motionless in it lay baby barba, like our home bull-heads. Dragonflies played about, chasing the brilliant insects which resorted there to drink. Butterflies quivered in the sunlit air. I sat beside the fountain in delight, and watched its beauty for an hour.

After a most hospitable entertainment—for which thanks and the poor heel of my Dutch cheese were an inadequate but not an ungrateful return—we departed from the Campbell grounds, leaving Mr. Bartlett in hopeless bewilderment as to how we ever managed to get there. I am sure he is not more puzzled than myself, or every one else that has heard the story. For the third, and again the fourth time, my spider broke in getting through the wild ravine that shields the spot. At night-fall we reached the Hook, passing those Basuto villages I have described in a previous chapter. What a contrast were their wealth and neatness to the ramshackle barbarism of Jantje! Seldom, I suppose, were men more glad to see a river than were we to behold the stately Orange. It rolled near half a mile in width, but the ferry pont had not yet ceased to ply. I crossed, however, in a row boat, leaving the spider till next day. At Mr. Gers's hospitable little dwelling was found a pleasant party, and the kindest welcome possible. And so ended this adventure.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

BACK TO THE FIELDS.

The flood continues—The Orange River swollen thirty feet—Neglect of this stream as a water-way—What it would be in the East—The schemes proposed for transport—Railways, tramways, traction engines, elephants, camels—No one suggests using the rivers—Considerations on that subject—The railway schemes, their value—Necessity of a telegraph at once—Forty feet of flood in the river—Falling of the banks—Our house in danger—The water subsides—Hopetown in an ox-waggon—Prince Bismark's support of the Berlin Missionaries' claim—The reason of Waterboer's journey to Nomansland—Reports about it—Kaffir traders in Hopetown—Bad reports of trade—Story of a trader's supper—Twenty thousand pounds worth of diamonds lost on the veldt—Recklessness of Government in postal arrangements—Positive certainty of a great disaster from this cause—The Banks henceforth refuse to ensure diamonds—Belmont again—Jacobsdaal—An amusing crew at supper—Mr. Ascher—Major B. and his shadow—Chances of Major B.'s escape—He gives his shadow the slip and vanishes—Instant pursuit—Life in Jacobsdaal—The Mod River—A curious and striking scene—The fair on each bank—We get safely across—A child stuck in the mud—Bultfontein once more—My pet diamond split—The inspectors have again failed to send in their accounts—Money and reports due to proprietors are both four months' late—Worse state of things at New Rush—Coal from the Transvaal—Nine pounds weight of diamonds.

FEB. 1, 1872.—The rivers are still rising fast. What a tremendous rainfall must it have been to swell these two great streams to such a height! In normal times at this season the Orange may be 250 or 300 yards broad and 50 feet deep here; quadrillion gallons of rain must have been poured into its channel to raise the stream 30 feet! Scarcely less astonishing is it to learn that sometimes the current almost ceases to flow, and the river-bed is a chain of pools in which the monstrous barba may be seen,

Digitized by Google

lying like sunk canoes upon the bottom. In any other country such a river as this would be a highway of traffic. I could fancy the throng of boats that would cover its waters if the population were Malays or Chinamen. There are no impassable rapids between this place—nor from high above this place—and the embouchure in Namaqualand. Ships of three hundred tons could ascend it in one half the year as far as Hopetown—much further if necessary.* All sorts of produce and trade goods could be delivered at the diamond fields one-third of their present price, were the natural highways of the country utilised. What busy towns, what fertile meadows would line its banks in India! What millions would be fed and clothed by these idle waters! They would resound with the clank of paddle and the boatman's song. At eventide the monotonous beat of tom-toms would drowsily answer one another in the stream. Steps high and broad, such as one climbs in dream-land, would descend to the river's edge, and upon them, up and down, a gaudy crowd would pass, beneath a pale green sky, ablaze with fire in the west, reflected on the tawny wavelets. And men might pray to the blessed river, which gave their parched-up soil its life, and brought the world's produce to their doors. Nay, not alone in teeming India would such a stream be sacred. To every land of the fragrant East, the poorest and most savage, beneficent service would its waters render. Under the silent forests of Borneo, the trader's *sampan*, the chieftain's war canoe, the humble dug-out of the fisherman might float over it. The stream would be vocal with the Moslem's evening prayer, the shrill shout of the Dyak. Its rapid current would bear cut trunks of the sago palm, sweet *sinka* wood, great lumps of valuable gum, fashioned to the likeness of its tutelary spirit. High-pitched villages would stand beside it in groves of *penang* palm and *durien* orchards.

* I feel confidence in asserting this, having made particular inquiries on the subject. There is, however, a general impression that heavy rapids break the course—an impression I believe to be erroneous.

Digitized by Google

Gardens would be irrigated by its overflow. In peace or war, to every Eastern race, the stream would be a crowded highway.

What to the African is this noble river? An evil, a dangerous nuisance, nothing more! Not a boat is found upon it, save those that hasten to convey the traveller across. It moistens no field, bears never a load of goods. No man has traced its course. The great fish dwell therein unharmed. Kaffir and white man shun its neighbourhood.

I believe that great railway schemes will be forced upon the Cape Government ere long, of which the upshot must needs be an incredible burden on the exchequer. Transport rises every day. I have seen it mount, in two months, from 25*s.* to 35*s.* the 100 lbs. Even at such a monstrous rate, the resources of the colony are not equal to the sudden press of business. Ten times the supply of carriage is demanded, and higher rates would willingly be paid by those who have not their regular service of transport riders. One of the first merchants in South Africa told me, some days ago, that he had a hundred waggon-loads of goods lying in his warehouse at Port Elizabeth, without prospect of delivery; and this gentleman has, of course, immense advantages in the matter beyond poor rivals. There are a hundred schemes afloat for facilitating and cheapening carriage. From the training of elephants, which may be considered poetry, to the importation of a traction engine, which is certainly prose, projectors take a various flight amongst tramways, railroads, Arabian camels, and Montevidean pack mules. But no man has yet suggested the utilising of our rivers. It is to be borne in mind, that all these schemes have regard to the diamond fields. They are the terminus to all of them. Only to serve their needs is any change required, and to them it is looked for profit.

I had not the opportunity, nor the means, to concert any scheme for turning the two fine rivers of this region to account. What few facts I could gather, had the result of causing some astonishment on the part of those interested in questions of transport. It

Digitized by Google

appeared to have entered no man's head to use the Orange. Perhaps there may be such difficulties in the way as effectually negative the idea, but I will undertake to say that, if such there be, it is not owing to them it has not hitherto been entertained. What is the fact? From all I could learn, there is no impediment whatever between Hopetown and the mouth, which should prevent seagoing vessels of some considerable size ascending in average seasons. A line of battle-ship might sail up at this moment of flood; but, to take the usual depth, it will be safe to calculate that a craft of three hundred tons could get up. The prevalent breeze is favourable, and, though the current be extraordinarily swift, it is strong enough to carry a vessel forward. Even though steam were necessary, there would still be a clear profit of 50 to 75 per cent. over the goods land-carried. And a steamer of such size might come from England direct, coaling at St. Helena, and so avoid the cost of trans-shipping at Capetown. Snags are little to be feared. On arrival at the Hook, from which I write, the vessel might be unloaded, and its cargo sent in lighters up the Vaal to Pniel direct, and thus 750 miles, or 450 miles, of land carriage, might be reduced to 25, without one river to cross.

I give this idea to those who have the opportunity—if indeed any one has that—of testing its value. All depends upon the navigation of the Orange. If it be such as was reported to me, on the best authority I could obtain, the scheme is more than feasible—it is easy and safe.

Whilst upon this subject I may speak of the projects referred to above. The railroad, though it be the favourite, and though I do not doubt that it will ultimately be carried out, I shall not dwell upon. If ever improvement was predestined to ruin a country, the Diamond Fields Railway is "that identical."

It is an axiom, proved by experience, that a line will never pay by through traffic alone. It must be fed by local trade and transport. Of such there is none here, nor will be for many years:

Digitized by Google

except the wool—which would give but a small and uncertain revenue—and the skins, there is no heavy product of the country worth exporting. The population need not be mentioned. It does not average one to the square mile along the route past Victoria, and, such as it is, holds motion in abhorrence. It would take many diamonds, indeed, to make a freight, and many ostrich feathers, and much ivory. No other thing comes from the north, besides the wool and skins referred to already. A railway, therefore, though it could be cheaply made upon the whole, must be abandoned as a commercial scheme. If it be made, Cape Colony will bear its cost upon the back for as long as the land endures, as it bears already that of the fragment of fifty miles to Wellington. An inexpensive tramway is more promising. There is a projector now upon the fields who undertakes to lay his line from Port Elizabeth at an average rate of £400 per mile, and, perhaps, he may ere long be asked to show his skill in a small space. But meantime the public is expecting great results from certain traction engines now on their way out. I trust they may prove equal to the most enthusiastic anticipations, a great saving; but I fear these colonial roads, which are, indeed, nothing more than beaten tracks across the veldt, will utterly break up and crumble away under the pressure of an iron engine and its train of waggons. Every here and there the path is intersected by a dry water-course, from two to twenty feet deep, with banks like precipices;—how shall the engine cross these? Or, again, there are shallow rivers in the way, running between high cliffs of mud, and like quagmires at the bottom. Would our ponts bear a twenty-five ton engine? I have not yet heard how such difficulties shall be surmounted.

But it is quite certain something must be done, if the diggings continue to grow. Whilst engineers and speculators are deciding what that shall be, I would most urgently suggest that a telegraph line is needed at once. This territory of West Griqualand is the most valuable strip of South Africa—incomparably more

Digitized by Google

important than all the other colonies together. It has rescued the land from bankruptcy. It has multiplied the imports immensely, and added £80,000 a-year to the customs' revenue. It has changed the rate of money exchange, so that it stands at 6 per cent. in favour of the colony. Men of all ranks benefit by the flood of wealth. Mortgages that had been held hopeless—it was not even worth while for the creditor to foreclose!—are paid off daily. Every tradesman, blessed with common sense, is making a rapid fortune. And yet the men who have achieved this great revolution, and are daily perfecting their work, cannot communicate with the capital, or with the Government, under eight days, nor get a reply under twenty. The postal system, in so far as we have any system at all in it, is disgraceful. The reckless improvidence of which I have had often to complain in observing the executive proceedings of the new government—for its legislation, as shown in the celebrated proclamations, is most excellent and thoughtful—is nowhere shown so forcibly as in the arrangements for the post. For some weeks after the annexation, we really seemed to have no attempt at management. There was only one office, that at Dutoitspan, which has made four distinct migrations in two months and a half. No living man, least of all the overworked officials, knew when the English mail was due to come or go; I once relied upon a public and formal advertisement of the hour, and discovered, when too late, that P.M. had been misprinted for A.M. But if the post worked as excellently as Sir Rowland Hill's, it could not be fast enough for our requirements. We are in a difficult and uncertain position up here. Disturbances might arise, as experience has shown even during my residence, which would call for active and resolute interference; but the Commissioners themselves dwell four hours away, at Klipdrift, and they have no quicker means of communicating with the Governor than anybody else. There is at present a panic on the fields, and information of the latest news from home might make this man's fortune, or avert the other's ruin; but both alike must

Digitized by Google

wait the tardy and uncertain mail cart. When the rivers are out, there is actually no communication whatsoever between this and the capital. Of course, we have no bridges, and it has happened, and will happen again, that the post should be late a week or more. It is intolerable that we should be dependent on the weather in this fashion. A telegraph is an absolute necessity for us, but I think no railway or tram project can commend itself as a commercial speculation. The only feasible scheme appears to be to increase the number of waggons and mules, working on better roads and safer fords; or else water carriage through the rivers.

At the evening of Feb. 1st, the Orange probably had risen forty feet, and the Vaal twenty-five at least. There is no more crossing, and the pont is secured by the strongest chains to the stoutest tree-trunks. It went over once to-day, to fetch my cart and horses, but the risk and danger were found so serious that no offer could induce the pont-men to make another essay. The current runs like a mill-sluice, whirling down trunks of trees, and roots, and whole islands of vegetation. There is a sound in our ears as of artillery firing minute guns, but every hour or so a burst of thunder overwhelms the din. These sounds are produced by the falling of the banks. They break off quicker than the eye can turn, and disappear with tremendous splash and bubbling. At sundown the stream had crept into sight from the window of our tiny sitting-room. The danger to our house was evident. It stole towards the threshold, a dull brown flood, slowly circling tawny bubbles round like a thousand hateful eyes; and so paused sullenly till morning, as if at watch upon us. My friend Gers insisted upon harnessing two of his horses to the spider, for mine were too knocked up for work this month to come. He did so, and they straightway kicked the *dussel-boom* to pieces, to the detriment of my property, but to the glorification of my foresight.

The river began to fall at dawn. By eight o'clock two feet of

Digitized by Google

slimy mud bordered its furious current. I started for Hopetown at two P.M. in a bullock-waggon, my first and last experience of that patriarchal equipage. Like riding on a camel, or enjoying life at sea, it is a matter of practice to be comfortable in an ox-waggon. You cannot sit with ease, nor read, nor do any other thing. You cannot sleep all day; at least, an Englishman cannot, and for no other occupation is there fitting room. Straight on the bullocks go, over all that comes, at one even pace, dragging by main strength. One understands somewhat of the boer character by a short journey in this vehicle. Jogging on, night and day, at two P.M. on Saturday, February 3rd, I reached Hopetown, and rejoiced to find Mr. Webb very greatly better. Whether with the wet, the fatigue, or the anxiety, I no sooner came to rest in this oasis than I broke out in violent eruptions, boils and blains all over me.

On the 5th, visited Mr. Arnot, who always holds the latest political news. He tells us that Prince Bismarck has so far taken up the cause of the Berlin mission as to send a note of inquiry to the English Government. It was received the very same day as Lord Kimberley wrote his approval of Sir H. Barkly's acts in taking possession of the lands in question. The missionaries have actually no case. They claim something like 100,000 acres of Waterboer's ground, in freehold, on the strength of a payment in goods, alleged value £80, to the chief's father. What a contrast is this sum to the £480,000 which a gentleman in this neighbourhood puts upon a *thirty-three years' lease* of some half million of acres in Monkoran's country! Mr. Arnot ridicules a rumour current that Waterboer has no intention of returning to the ceded territory. He says that the cause of his journey into Nomansland was the anxiety of Mrs. Waterboer to see her brother, Adam Kok. One may remember also, without disparagement of her sisterly affection, that the chief of Nomansland grows old, and has no children. His habits, too, are such as render life doubly uncertain. Mr. Arnot laughs at the thought of any dissatisfaction

Digitized by Google

on the part of the Griqua people. He says every act of Waterboer's has had their approval, so far as any cared about the matter.

Hopetown is still the great rendezvous of traders on this route. Here they lay in stock for two or three years' travel in the interior, and hither they bring their ivory and feathers. Messrs. Lilienfeld are the largest dealers in these articles of the world. Ten thousand pounds weight, at eighty feathers to the pound, is no unusual sale for them; and they sell fortnightly at Port Elizabeth. A curious and diverting race are the Kaffir traders, of whom there are generally one or two about Mr. Lilienfeld's house. Mostly they congregate at the canteen and billiard-rooms just opposite, kept by an ancient fellow of their craft. It is an affair of months to get together, choosing piece by piece, the necessary goods and stores. But, however long be their stay in this realm of comparative civilisation, the worthy gentlemen never seem to lose that peculiar vagrant air which makes them appear to be only encamped. There is much that reminds one of Indian traders in their look and habits. They are, those I saw much of, by far the best-dressed men of the country; but they take pleasure in more brilliant colours, more startling contrasts, than is usual. All seem to enjoy lots of money, and credit unlimited, but every man declares that trade no longer can be made to pay. It is an obvious fact that the glorious days when picked ostrich feathers could be bought upon Dutoitspan at a halfpenny bead apiece, have vanished. The thing is overdone, like other professions. But I fancy the experienced hands still know the secret of some pretty plunder.

But it was not this I was about to discuss, only to tell an anecdote. Some days ago, two of the bronzed and bearded men who hang around the billiard-table—when they have nothing else to do—invited a select party to a champagne supper at the hotel. The guests arrived in great expectation, and saw with delight the table laid in a manner that promised glorious

Digitized by Google

doings. All was prepared, and they sat down, with the two hosts facing one another at either end. They are marked men amongst the hardy crew. The first course did not please their critical taste. The second was not more successful. "I don't like this," cried S., "and I shall go!" He rose, and leisurely put the corner of the tablecloth in his trousers' pocket. H. did the same at his end. "Good night, gentlemen," they courteously said, and moved away. The table-cloth dragged after them, and crash and smash went bottle and glass and plate. Not a whole *couvert* was left in the hotel, and the reckless fellows adjourned in the highest spirits to their ex-comrade at the billiard-room.

7th.—Twenty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds is lost or stolen from the New Rush mails. "£500 Reward" is placarded on every tree and stump between this and Klipdrift. The bag was packed all right, it appears, in the mail cart, but was missing when sought at Hopetown. It was not taken by force, that is evident, and suspicion is not seriously felt of the Hottentot driver. He confesses to have left the cart once or twice in changing horses, for a quarter of an hour at a time. There is nothing strange in this. The drivers always do, not considering themselves responsible for diamonds, and incapable of crediting that any man should steal a mere letter. It is simply wonderful that no such accident has happened long before. Though this is actually the most difficult country in the world for highway robbery —seeing it has no cover nor hiding-place—the prize to be gained is so immense it might have been expected to outweigh the risk. One can scarcely understand such recklessness on the part of any Government as would and does allow twenty, or fifty, or a hundred thousand pounds' worth of gems to be carrried fortnightly in an open cart, driven by a wild Hottentot, over mountain and river, seven hundred miles, without a policeman or a soldier to protect it. More than this: the mail-carts are supposed and encouraged to take passengers, thus helping out a meagre subsidy. It is as sure as any event can be that, sooner or later,

Digitized by Google

two or three quiet-looking gentlemen will engage the vacant seats, and—teach our Government an elementary lesson of prudence. No better testimony to the diggers' character could be produced than the long immunity of the post carts. But the reign of Astræa has gone by.*

8th.—Tried to get back to the fields in Mr. Webb's cart. Drove out to the drift or ford, but found the pont engaged with an endless flock of sheep. Walked back, leaving John to put the cart across, ready for an early start to-morrow. At dark he drove up, professing to have been unable to cross. Next day, started at sunrise, and reached the drift before the pont-men had left their huts. A busy and a pleasant scene is the broad Orange in that early morning time. The level sun-rays flitter from surge to surge upon the stream. The pont lies in deep shadow beneath the bank. Only the topmost boughs of the willow-trees are tipped with radiant light, each throwing a lofty shade upon its neighbour. The bleating of sheep, the melancholy holloo of Kaffir boatmen, and the lap of the rapid current are our only sounds. By a long trek upwards, in the cool blue shadow of the trees, we managed to force ourselves across at a point but little below the drift. After heavy labour the level of the road was gained, and I set off towards Belmont. Springboks were frequent along the path thither. Mr. Wayland ordered his spring waggon and six fine horses to be ready after breakfast, and we started at noon for Jacobsdaal, in company with Mr. Jacklin, and safely arrived towards evening. Resisting a polite invitation from a resident, I put up at the "Hotel," or accommodation house as it is more fitly called, in Jacobsdaal. Here I had the pleasure of dining with the drollest company. Just opposite, carving mutton, I recognised with delight Mr. Ascher, the unfortunate canteen keeper of

* The bag in question was subsequently *picked up upon the veldt* some miles from Hopetown; and a farmer finding it brought it in with seals untouched. But the Government took no warning, though the bankers of the fields, more prudent, henceforth declined to insure diamonds, thereby multiplying the risk. Mischief will certainly arrive some day.

Digitized by Google

New Rush, who had caused the riots. After giving the evidence I have detailed elsewhere, he had been arrested and held to bail on a charge of purchasing diamonds knowing them to be stolen. Forfeiting his bail, he has fled hither. In a smoking-cap of the most beautiful colours, and a sort of dressing gown, he ruled the roast mutton, affably conversing with his neighbours. In many strange societies have I mixed, but never before was it my lot to sit at meat with a man accused, and self-convicted, of *petty* larceny. Some places higher was a grave and morose American, Major B——. On the same level, at my side, sat a brisk young gentleman in cords, knee-boots, and spurs, looking ready and eager to take the veldt at a moment's notice. He watched every movement of the Major with keen attention, like a cat at a mouse-hole. The Major never once glanced across, but kept his eyes upon his plate. They rose together, and young top-boots followed his prey at six inches' distance. Having watched him settle down to a game of *écarté* with a friend, he took a seat outside the door, and found leisure to explain to us the secret of this vigilance. It appears that Major B——, this gentleman, and two partners, have a claim at the New Rush which has proved fortunate. The respectable and grave American was elected, or appointed himself, receiver of the finds. Something agitated the confiding bosoms of his partners with suspicion, and they summoned him to yield up the joint possessions. This he civilly declined to do, and so confirmed their worst apprehensions. Appeal being made to Mr. Giddy, the treasurer vanished hastily in the direction of the Free State. Armed with a warrant, this gentleman pursued, and overtook his fugitive here, where, for the moment, he is safe. But the means of enjoying his plunder are not to be found in the Free State, and it is certain he will not stay therein one day beyond necessity. He must make for the seaboard and get away. But every port within the confines of civilisation is in English hands. There are, indeed, the Portuguese settlements, 1,500 miles to the north, but if he could reach them, an impossible journey in a cart,

Digitized by Google

his pursuer might claim him under the extradition treaty. The Free State, and the Transvaal, wherein he is secure, have no seaports. It was evident, then, to the amateur constable that his victim's every effort would be devoted to throwing him off the track, or, possibly, to more desperate measures. Therefore did he watch night and day. Nevertheless, the first news I learned in the morning was the escape of Major B——, at the sacrifice of a black portmanteau. Keeping his eyes on this decoy, the gentleman in top boots suffered his enemy to give him the slip at an early hour this morning. He was mounting in chase as I came out, and had but time to shout the circumstances of this disaster; then, waving his hand, galloped off like a centaur. I don't know the end of the story, but though our young friend had not hitherto distinguished himself in the detective line, I would back "the hunt" at ten to one in such a country.

Started at 6 A.M. The lower drift of the Mod River by Jacobsdaal is impassable, owing to the depth of mud, in which several oxen have lost their lives. Drove to the upper ford, and reached it about 7.30 A.M. The pont below sank a fortnight since, and all in it were drowned. It was a lovely morning when we left Jacobsdaal and Free State ground; morning always is lovely in this clear and brilliant atmosphere. No one could give us any definite idea as to our chance of getting through the Mod River. Situated, as is this wretched population, in the fork between two streams, which take it in turn to rise and swamp the country side, Jacobsdaalians are early taught in life to look on floods as natural enemies, with whom to struggle is hopeless. They seldom care to know which of the twin and equal foes is making war on them at a given moment. Sometimes, in the cool eve or early dawn, heavy-laden waggons come trooping in, piled with English stores and merchandise; then they know the Riet is passable. Sometimes in the blazing noon, their black and ruddy teams of oxen sullenly stream back to kraal, dragging the goods demanded for the omnivorous digger; thus they learn with resignation that the

Digitized by Google

Mod has broken bounds and wars against them. Oh, the dreariness of this tiny settlement! Oh, the stark-naked, German-Jewish, vulgar, square pretentiousness, which stares modesty and taste to agonized confusion, looking at the sudden outbreak of this place upon the veldt! Many of my readers will remember to have thought, as in a nightmare, How would it be to suffer life in one of those blear stations of the Egyptian railway, a square packing-case, poised upright between sun and sand, whence a filthy negro issues on the stoppage of the train, offering sweet-stuff and dates? Imagine a score of such sudden excrescences, set up with the same rectangular abruptness, equally stark and staring, equally defiant of all ornament, or grace, or taste, with no more colour, equally barren of shade or tree, equally perched on a barren desert! Jacobsdaal consists of shops, about a half-dozen in number, and empty house-boxes, which boers in the neighbourhood have built for a town residence. The whole white population may be fifty souls, and as many of black. It would seem absurd to mention such a dingy little nest elsewhere, but Jacobsdaal would occupy no inconsiderable place in a Free State gazetteer—if there were one. I am told that the trade of its half-dozen shops is incredible. The store-keepers never deal under cent. per cent. profit, and turn their money over a fatiguing number of times *per annum*. *Voguent les affaires!* say I; but no per-centage, and no somersaulting of money will change their barbarous little crows'-nest. To achieve that feat, needs qualities which I will not enumerate, and which I earnestly hope may be granted with all speed to the Jacobsdaalians.

I have wandered from the passage of the Mod River, but the Free State town (!) lies on one's way, and, after all, it is an effective "picture from South Africa" in its own style. We found a regular camp upon the hither bank of the swollen streams; on the opposite shore there appeared to be a sort of fair just closing. Waggons had begun to pass the day before, and we saw but the remains of the assemblage. For all departures, how-

Digitized by Google

ever, there were still sixteen tilted vehicles on our side, with light carts innumerable, and the plain was amove with oxen, mules, and horses. Men, black and white, clothed only in their innocence and the deep river slime, were tearing about, brandishing great whips, and making the very atmosphere re-echo with their crack. Patient oxen were grumbling thunderously beneath the yoke. Women cooked at fires piled with a fortnight's ashes. Children raced about and assisted with the cattle, in that precocious skill which marks the youngster here. Some of the people had been sixteen days waiting; one had actually treked along the bank six weeks, looking for a break. It was found at length, and all were deadly anxious to get first. No one could tell how long the river would be falling. But the banks, here as elsewhere, were precipices of mud, most scantily bound with thorns. Perhaps the sheer descent might be fifty feet, and what small effort at a road had once existed was now washed as smooth as any part. The day before, a hundred men on either side had set to work cutting a track. Mighty poor engineers were they; but time pressed, and a bullock's life is cheap. At the deadly risk of turning an actual somersault, a waggon could pass along the excavated path; whether any did tip head-first over I cannot tell, we only heard of a broken break, and the hind oxen crushed to death. But one could get through at a time, nor were two waggons allowed in the water at once. There was no authority, of course, but the habit of such dangers has laid down rules which every boer and colonist imbibes with mother's milk. It was the liveliest of wild scenes below. The waggon which had been standing on the brink set off with a monstrous creak and crack at the moment that the hind wheel of its predecessor emerged from the rapid stream. With breaks screwed up to the last turn, wheels chained down, and men hanging on behind, the massive vehicle pitched downwards. There was a mud-hole two feet deep on one side of the incline, and to drop into this was equivalent to a "stick." Few of the waggons had less than twenty-four oxen;

Digitized by Google

most had thirty to draw them through. The neighbouring farmers reaped a little fortune by hiring out their cattle to assist the crossing. Sometimes the mud-hole was "shaved" by an inch or two, and the huge machine went toppling and screaming in its downward course. On the rocks below stood naked Kaffirs ready to guide it through. The proprietor, the driver, and all his friends, stripped, shouldered a mighty whip, and entered the stream. Then began the row. Our banks were noisy with shouting, with the pistol-cracking of stock whips, with cries of children to each other, and shrill laughter of the blacks, but, when a waggon reached mid-stream, these feeble sounds were drowned. Generally the oxen "stuck." The water rose to their necks, and then they bellowed with excitement. Like thunder their united voices swelled upwards. Above this deeper din arose the acuter cries, the yells and shouts of drivers, and the ceaseless file-firing of whips. There was a crowd of expectant watchers on each bank; and when, as sometimes happened, an anxious waggoner pitched head foremost down a hole, the chorus of laughter rose above all other sounds. But the most serious difficulty lay in the mud upon the other bank. This was, indeed, frightful. Worked into puddled clay by the ceaseless trampling of hoofs and wheels, it clung to the very axletree. Whilst watching, I beheld a child of perhaps ten years spring from a waggon fast there. She struggled for an instant, then fell back, and screamed with fear. The quagmire closed about her limbs, and held them fast like wax. Nor could the women rescue her. It was work for the strongest men to drag her out, and I fear she must have been injured. Through such stuff as this to draw five thousand pounds of merchandise tested the strength even of thirty oxen. But the work went on with surprising regularity, and, before we had finished our camp breakfast on the other side, every waggon was through, and the fair broken up. Next day the treacherous stream came down again; it is "down" now, thirty feet deep; and I am not at all sure that any ford upon it has been pass-

Digitized by Google

able for more than six hours at a stretch for this last month. The ferry-boat, at the time I write, has been fished up, and is ready for work again. The new proprietors, however, have taken such good warning by their predecessors' fate they will not work when the stream is high. When the stream is low, one can use the ford, and the wonder is when the ferrymen expect to make their money.

Reached Bultfontein safely, and found Dr. Dyer, our new medical inspector, stopping at the Residence. That mansion was in a state to satisfy a gipsy's ideal. Having been re-floored with ants' nests all over, re-whitewashed, re-windowed, and re-doored, it was no longer fit to live in. As a camping ground nothing could be more satisfactory, and as such we used it. We crossed the quagmire floors on a plank laid down, we slept in hammocks and on tables. The principal articles of furniture were economically supplied by a pile of portmanteaus and gun cases. Nothing occupied its old place except the fleas, and they were innumerable beyond former abundance, having been all driven from their haunts into one room, and feeling exasperated in consequence. Bad news was in store. My partner in a diamond speculation had given £250 for a perfect gem of fifteen and a half carats. It split last night! This is our second misadventure of the sort. We bought another dear gazelle, nine and a half carats, some time back. After lying in the safe at Bultfontein two months, it split, and we sold it at a loss of £40. Such agonies environ the soul of the diamond kooper in South Africa. The news of the diggings is but small. After repeated applications, the Government had promised to get the inspector's accounts to-day, but they have not been sent in. Though the proclamation orders a monthly settlement with the proprietors, not one penny has been paid them, nor one account rendered, since the annexation in November. It is avowed and confessed by the Commissioners that the confusion into which the inspectors have muddled their books is the cause of this unjustifiable delay. One official at New Rush appears to be worse than ours at Dutoitspan. He has

Digitized by Google

returned accounts which show a deficiency of £168 cash. Bultfontein digging is very full. There are at least twice as many parties here at work as when I left a month ago.

Two waggon-loads of coal from the Transvaal were sold to-day at New Rush market. It is well known that extensive beds of it are found up yonder. This quantity came from the neighbourhood of the gold-fields at Leydenberg, to which spot a blacksmith by the Hook is in the habit of sending his waggons each year in the off season. It lies perhaps eight hundred miles to the north of this. He describes the coal as excellent for all purposes. I am told that there is a vein of silver lead on Waterboer's property at the Hook.

Messrs. Sonnenberg are said to have nine pounds' weight of diamonds, 30,000 carats, in their possession. I will guarantee that this report is not far from truth.

From Klipdrift the news is that Sir H. Barkly has pressed the Commissioners to demand troops for the preservation of order. Some fact there may be in this. It is said that the regiments at Capetown were held to readiness for the *route* at a moment's notice when the tale of our riots came down. Also that Lord Kimberley has authorised the Governor to demand any aid he thinks himself to want from Mauritius or elsewhere. Fortunately, there is no need of such strong measures. To move a thousand English troops up here would cost not less than £100,000, perhaps the double of that.

The Commissioners have refused Mr. Fry permission to protect the interests of his charge by sending a man round to see that all working parties hold a license. I do not understand on what principle this is denied him. Undoubtedly (as will be proved hereafter) there are many persons digging without any license, to the fraud and loss of the company. It is distinctly the charge of Government, self-imposed, to prevent such abuses, as the proprietors used to do, at a cost of £300 a year. But the Commissioners decline either to do it themselves, or to let others at their own expense.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECOND NEWEST RUSH.

Another rush—The probabilities of its value—How diggers feel about new discoveries—The rich man's view, the poor man's—Great excitement—The carts all requisitioned—Messrs. S. buy the kopje provisionally—Best's kopje—Changes at the old New Rush—The Leviathan digger, how he lives—Quantity of diamonds held back—Hospitality of New Rush—A visit to the claims—Signs of the end—Cutting away the roads—A funeral at New Rush; the hearse, the clergy, the mourners.

FEB. 14.—Dutoitspan is again in an agony. We have another "newest rush." Some time back rumours had been brought to me of a kopje about four miles from this, on the Boshoff Road, on which, it was whispered, several diamonds had been picked up. Few were trusted with the confidential intelligence, and of those few the majority did not credit it. There is a motive strongly felt to stifle news of the kind. All successful men are desperately afraid of a new discovery. They feel that the immediate consequence of that event would be to depreciate diamonds so terribly as to ruin the fields. On this account, they set their faces against further prospecting, and vehemently discredit every new rush, even whilst marking out their claims upon it. Experience also leads, in sincerity, towards this disbelief. We are all desperately weary of new rushes. How many has an old digger seen!—and all unprofitable! There are scores of inducements to tempt the unscrupulous to "salt" some bit of land with half-a-dozen little stones, and thus attract a hot and excited crowd. So that those who calmly review the rushes they have seen, and subtract the actual successes, find that not

Digitized by Google

one in fifty comes to aught. So many times have we been dragged to some distant spot by splendid rumour, fruitlessly! And how often have we resisted splendid rumour, and congratulated ourselves upon the resistance! Perhaps, in all, a hundred times. But, after three years' search, the fruitful kopjes can be numbered on one's hand. Of river diggings there are Pniel, Gong-Gong, Delport's Hope, Hebron, Cawood's Hope, Moonlight Rush, and Bluejacket. Of dry diggings there are the eternal four. Acting on this calculation, wise men are loth to waste a day in pursuing a novel quest, which they neither believe nor wish to turn out successful. Content with their own rich claims, they want no more. And, though there be a selfish feeling in this, it is not pure selfishness which actuates them.

But whilst poorer brethren are to some extent aware how disastrous their activity may be, it is not to be expected that they will regard the matter with quite the same feelings. Amongst these, and especially among the new-comers, a crowd may be gathered and led as easily as a flock of sheep by an ancient goat. To these classes the report had penetrated during my absence. I came back to find the kopje one sole topic of discourse in canteen and by claim-side. Many believed, more doubted, most denied whether or no, but nearly every one intended to mark a claim. The importance of the discovery upon the home markets, if true, every one admitted with dismay, but it is nobody's business to regulate supply. "Why should one fellow stand out for the sake of prices?" was the remark not unnatural. It is true enough. If a man can beg or borrow a pick, a spade, a sieve, and a sorting-table, why should he not find diamonds for himself, and make what he can? It is not my business to confound myself in meshes of political economy, but it may be allowed one to doubt whether jewel digging can ever be carried on to the advantage of the world by such a system.

However, at this time the blaze of the newest rush was at its height, as I found to my cost on attempting a visit to the Coles-

Digitized by Google

berg Kopje, the old New Rush, that *par excellence*. Had I not heard? Was it not true? Had I seen the stones found, had you, had any one? Oh, a cart, a cart! An eighteen carat, picked up beneath a rock, I do assure you, with many oaths. All rubbish together, on the security of my eyes and limbs! Fire and fury, get me a cart! Oh, garroo, garoo, get me a cart! Let's all be off! I'll take a claim next yours! I'll give ten pounds for that space you marked yesterday! I'll give fifteen, twenty! Oh, let's "jump" a cart! It was some time before I found the secret of this excitement. Word had that day gone forth that our greatest speculator here had paid £9,000 for the tract of land in question, and had solicited the immediate attention of Captain Rorke, the Claim-Inspector of Dutoitspan, to the discovery. The ground is believed to be beyond the line of British territory, but diggers care nothing for political considerations. All they ask is authority to dig, from some one, from anybody; and it has happened before now that a gentleman of bold and resolute character has issued licenses for ground over which he had no rights at all, and received the money. Captain Rorke was to go out, they said, that morning, and partition claims. Every cart coming in from New Rush, which we must now call the Colesberg Kopje, was seized and chartered for the opposite direction. The spot had already a name, by whom or why conferred no one knows. It is called James's Kopje, and by that title it may earn fame, or, more probably, it may be numbered in the endless list of abortive rushes. In general, one has not to wait ten minutes in the main street of Dutoitspan, before getting a cart of some sort, heading for Colesberg Kopje. I had now to hang around an hour and a half, though vehicles were numerous enough. They all fell into the Briarian hands of James's Kopje enthusiasts. I passed the time endeavouring to make out what real foundation there exists for the excitement. It did not come to much of certain. The prospecting parties seem to have been going on quietly enough, making a little pro-

Digitized by Google

bably, but nothing more than may reasonably be expected on a spot so near Dutoitspan that two acres of claims have already been traced out within the boundary of that farm. Suddenly, twenty-four hours from this time, the rumour spread that an eighteen carat had been picked up. Simultaneously with this, came news that Messrs. S., the enterprising firm I have mentioned, had paid £9,000 for the farm in question. Hence the fury. I turned to the investigation of this matter, and ascertained that the purchase was provisional on the approbation of some gentlemen, whose answer could not be expected before the 27th inst. On that day, therefore, Messrs. S. accept or decline the property, at their full and free option. It is not uncharitable to point out, I hope, that its value will be accurately tested by that time, for there are five hundred men energetically digging at this moment. If it be all their fancy painted it, the bargain will probably be concluded; and if not, not. More evidence I could not find, nor do I believe there are six persons in camp who really know the truth about James's Kopje. These have all an interest one way or other, and it would be useless asking them. Time will show. A hundred diggers, working might and main, soon prove a ridge. Of all the rushes now abandoned, the only one of which any doubt at all remains is "Best's kopje," on Dutoitspan farm, some mile and a half from the great digging. There are still a few, I find, who shake their heads regretfully in speaking of this place.

At length, mustering three trustworthy friends, we seized a cart, and drove to the old, the real, the true New Rush. There was no talk in our two mile journey, except of the last excitement. Even the good fellow who has sanitary improvement on the brain forgot to grumble at the carcases and skeletons that line the road. In twenty minutes or so, we reached the wondrous camp. It was near a month since I had visited a spot which daily grows in interest. Change takes place each hour. The clank of hammers only fails at sundown. The tent-makers are in themselves a host,

Digitized by Google

and they never have an idle moment, except wilfully. How many new stores and offices had been erected, how many new streets designed and partly occupied, how many fresh koopers set up business, fresh diggers come, old diggers gone, how many Kaffirs tramped in, how many living, how many dead, no one knew or cared. I have visited the Colesberg Kopje often enough to have recovered the first feeling of amazement. I can now find my way a little, nor wander hours amongst the crowded tents, seeking the main street. But every visit impresses one more strongly with the size of the camp and the energy of its population. I remember to have laughed with scorn when people estimated the inhabitants at 20,000 souls. I think now that calculation much beneath the mark. It is a forest, a labyrinth of tent-poles, and a billowy sea of canvas. To seek therein for any one person, or any one tent, is more hopeless than to wander through the streets of London on that same errand. Roads everywhere, of every fashion and repute, from the broad street lined with iron stores, and pretty canvas houses, to the scrubby path between Kaffir huts. Every road is of deep red sand, and between the tents, be the interval never so narrow, stands the everlasting heap of snow-white lime, the sifting. The low brush has not been removed, and it throws out a feeble yellow flower here and there. Pretentious canteens or low drinking-tents meet the eye every step. In some space of clearer ground, on the outskirts of the camp, stands a lordly dwelling of canvas, lined with baize, its roof of reed or protected by a "fly." Around it are smaller tents, the offices, the dining-room, and such like. This is the abode of a Leviathan, one of the lucky fellows of the world. Here, if you can claim the privilege of entrance, will be offered to you every luxury procurable on the fields. Fine horses dwell in the stable there, and eat nothing but fodder at 2*s.* the bundle of four pounds. A "cart" of exquisite construction, snowy of tilt, resplendent of paint, stands beneath its awning. A coolie cook, clad in tunic and turban, pursues the study of his art, with Kaffir

Digitized by Google

assistance, in the tent near by. The owner of the whole, most likely, will show you carelessly the current coin of his quick fortune. From an empty tobacco-jar, or something of that capacity, he will pour you out a half-pint or so of gems. "These," he exclaims, "I keep, paying my expenses with the worthless stuff." Amongst the spoil you will discover monstrous stars of stone, twenty, forty, sixty carat weight, or double of that maybe. In the glittering pile so roughly pushed about and spread by anything that comes handy, a pipe, a butcher's knife, the bottom of a tumbler, or the big, brown fist of your host, will be seen countless little gems, glass-white, from five carats to the half of one, worth more almost than any of those great cubes and octohedrons. He declares he will sell any of them at his own price, but is not anxious to do so. "Look at that," saith your Leviathan, pushing out a stone literally as big as a throstle's egg, "there is a sixty-five carat, as bright as a yellow comet. What will those villains"—it's a mild translation, villains!—"give me for that? Two pounds ten to three pounds the carat! Because they say it's coloured! I'll tell you what I shall do. I'm only waiting till this or that takes place, then I go home, I get them yellow fellows cut, and off I go to Turkey, to India, to China, to Timbuctoo. *There*, wherever it may be, I get just £10,000 for that sixty-five carat, and £5,000 for that, and £1,000 a-piece for that lot of twenty over there, and so on, and so on; and what will you take to drink?" In one such group of tents, which is shared amongst three successful diggers, I have seen certainly a pint of finds reserved. The foolish fellows had kept them in hopes of a better market, and now they cannot get one-third of the price which they refused six months ago. These, of course, are over and above the cost of their expenses, both in working and in a style of life somewhat verging on extravagance.

One leaves the tent, conscious generally of a muzziness in the brain, caused by brandy and water or champagne (!), at an unusual hour. The sunshine so brilliant seems more fierce than ever. The tents are whiter and more dazzling, the red sand

Digitized by Google

deeper, the cries and laughter more vociferous, the siftings more difficult to climb. One meets a friend, a happy, honest fellow whom one knew in the golden time long since. His fortune has gone, and a second, and a third. Now, I am pleased to say, he is in train to make a fourth, and may the fruits of his own industry thrive better and last longer than did those inherited from others. I remember him a gentleman with never a crease in all his garments. Now, he wears—for he comes from the claims —an ancient pair of trousers, corduroy, and gravely stained; veldt boots, of untanned leather, and uncertain shape; a nameless garment of flannel, bound with a belt about his waist, having sleeves cut off at elbows, and great brown arms protruding; a billycock hat with an ostrich feather, and an eternal pipe, complete the costume. "Come to the Pig and Whistle!" exclaims he, across a mule cart trotting by, with one wheel in a rut and the other on a sifted heap. With difficulty I excuse myself, on the plea that such nondescripts as I do not rise at dawn and take a whole day's exercise before ten o'clock. But the only apology for refusing, accepted without offence on the Colesberg Kopje, is the cabalistic words, "I am going to see what my Kaffirs are about!" This silences the most pressing invitation, for reason good. But a step further, and an illustration is afforded of the results of drinking "just two drains" before taking one's life in hand amongst the claims. I see a little crowd around a well, and learn how some rich fellow going past has made one false step, and tumbled downwards. He is dead, cut to pieces, before taken out. Further on I strike the tap road which encircles the kopje. From this, as spokes from a wheel, radiate the working roads, between the claims, twelve in number. The tap road winds about amongst little mountains of sifting, at the bottom of each of which stands a Kaffir working at his sieve, and on the top a group of whites and blacks at the sorting table. Climb one of them, and, as far as the eye can reach, nothing is to be seen but similar hillocks, similar Kaffirs and sorters at work. The view is

Digitized by Google

bounded by the heights of the kopje, and the town lies below a swell. I declare that sight to be amongst the most astonishing in the world, but there are greater wonders over the ridge. Tracking one's way through the white, deep sand, pursued by mule-carts loaded and empty, stolidly driven aside by oxen, hustled by blacks perspiring beneath buckets and sacks of "stuff," one pushes resolutely on to the "roads." It matters little which of these radii you take. I would recommend one about the middle, which gives a view on either side. Climb the reef or rock at its nearer end, and look around. I have once told, I think, what manner of sight it is. But in the month of my absence there have been changes astonishing. Ten thousand people are at work, like ants, on a space barely six acres, as I judge. Deep from the bowels of the earth comes the sound of their industry. The laughter, and shouting, and screamed directions of the Kaffirs re-echo from wall to wall, and reach the bewildered ear in a shrilly chorus. The clank of metal, the creak of pulleys, and the hoarser voices of white overseers make clamorous accompaniment. The claims, since I saw them last, are grown horridly deep and dangerous. On most roads all partitions and unworked fragments have been cut down, dividing the earth to a line's breadth, and now, on either side the narrow, broken pathway, is a sheer descent of fifty, sixty, eighty feet. The signs of the end draw closer on us. To insure possession of each inch of soil belonging to a claim, with the fortune it possibly contains, they shave the walls with scrapers. On a board let down the dizzy height, a man will stand and slice off every morsel that projects beyond the level on another's ground. Several of the roads are quite cut and gone in parts. One speculator gave £1,000 for the roadway between two claims, fifteen feet by thirty, making himself liable at the same time for a bridge, to cost £500 more. This structure is now erected, and stands upon monstrous stilts bridging the chasm. Other people have seized the idea, and such works are going on upon every hand. Several roads, also, have been con-

Digitized by Google

demned for cattle traffic. Accidents upon them had grown so frequent and so terrible, the inspector interfered. These, also, will doubtless come down in a short time.

Colesberg Kopje has probably seen its best days. It is matter of common remark, though I do not guarantee its truth, that not nearly so many diamonds from thence are now upon the market as were formerly. Dutoitspan, too, is as full as ever it can be under the disadvantage of possessing no roads. But the sudden increase of digging at Bultfontein is the most curious change I notice. Three months ago there were not probably a hundred working here, and now all the kopje is alive. In the general downfall of prices, which still goes on more rapidly descending, the stones of Bultfontein have suffered comparatively little. Small, and of the finest quality, they are not liable to deceive a buyer, nor are difficult to judge. Colesberg Kopje never enjoyed any repute for excellence, but for great quantity alone. Under such a system of working as rules there, it was easy from the first to calculate the length of time its small space could last, and that time draws to an end. But in the meanwhile, conviviality reigns rampant. There is an incredible plenty of money, and no means of spending it legitimately. I who write have run the gauntlet of cups, many's the time and place, since first, a freshman, I declined to muddle my young brains with college ale, and called in vain for Bass. But the hospitality of the Colesberg Kopje! It is irresistible, using, if necessary, *les voies de fait.* How the inhabitants exist I cannot comprehend; how they execute such wonderful works is simply beyond human speculating. They do not seem to die so much more frequently than at Dutoitspan, but they "live" about a thousand per cent. above our standard. I saw a striking funeral during my visit. Leading the procession were two gentlemen in black, clergy of some denomination, I presume, one of whom wore a green wide-awake. Followed, a mule cart, jolting, creaking, and complaining. In it a nigger, stock-whip in hand, upright, swearing at his animals in

Digitized by Google

a shrill *sotto voce*. The cart contained a coffin, built out of packing cases; a railway rug had covered it, and a kaross of jackal-skin spread underneath. But the jolting of the vehicle had thrown these palls half out, and they trailed behind. Then followed the friends of the deceased, a promising young fellow from Natal, I heard. They were fifty-two in number, and had plainly tried to make a mourning show. The failure was conspicuous—none got further in that direction than a black coat, evidently borrowed from a man of different size. Yet, for all their rolled-up sleeves, broad belts, and homely corduroys, these big fellows seemed to be as hearty in their mourning as any coach-borne, sable folks at home. All but two small diamond buyers, koopers, as they are called. They walked along, smiling and whispering and nudging one another. I do not see any reason to indulge the scorn these eager and industrious fellows raise. Their gains may be large and their veracity weak, but they have a desperately hard life, toiling from claim to claim in the sun, bargaining, perspiring, and forced to take a drink with every vendor. The lower of their class are often maltreated and robbed, with or without cause. But whilst rendering them every sort of justice, I could wish these specimens a worse fate than ever befell unlucky kooper in the claims. There was a moment's respectful pause as the procession passed, and then we resumed our pleasant gossip at the bar of that "Pig and Whistle," where two young officers, whilom of the 16th Lancers, profitably keep alive the name of their old Dublin Club.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM BULTFONTEIN TO BELMONT.

The license money paid over by inspectors—Question of boundaries at James's Kopje—Mr. Fry's notice thereupon—The kopje claimed as English ground—Attacked by dogs—Mr. Justice Barry our guest—An awful sunset—Leave for Belmont—Our horses—I am reported to be the sheriff and hangman of Griqualand—The Komerings struck by lightning—Springbok—The rivers flooded—Farmer W. and his family—Camp by the river bank—A stroll beside the Mod—Fleas in the sand—Farmer W.'s experience in digging—Koopers and Boers—Barolong Kaffirs at the ford—Chasing the lively flea—Clockfontein—A painted house—Mysteries never to be revealed—Our horses begin their pranks—They continue—They conclude—Mr. Barnard of Honey-nest Kloof—Foot-gangers—Defence against them—Forest flies.

FEB. 15th.—Mr. Giddy announces that the license money has been paid over by the inspectors, and their accounts are being verified; this is for Dutoitspan and Bultfontein, New Rush books being still delayed. Mr. Fry has given notice that the London and South African Exploration Company own all that portion of James's Kopje, the latest rush, which lies on the Dutoitspan side of the Boshof Road, and, through him, forbid the working of it. As there are not less than two acres of claims taken out upon the land in question, there may be some difficulty in exacting this legal right. The Commissioners have almost made up their minds about the boundary. It will in all probability be claimed as English (Mem.: it was so claimed finally). Dined at Dutoitspan. Returning, on a pitch-dark night, in company with F——, we were attacked by dogs, and most seriously frightened,—I answer for myself. There were not less than six large and savage animals upon us at once,

Digitized by Google

one ferocious fellow, as big as a mastiff, actually springing at us twice. This is a serious danger in all the camps. One almost takes one's life in hand going through New Rush in the night-time. Our guests in Bultfontein House often slept there from mere dread of the animals, or went away in a party, armed with revolvers or mighty clubs. We had repeatedly complained. I wish Mr. Thompson or Mr. Justice Barry, or Mr. Giddy, when our guests, had only strolled one night through the claims, as we sometimes had to do,—for it was a most difficult thing to strike the road unless the moon shone brightly. To be chased by a score of furious dogs, amidst wells, pitfalls, and precipices, is such an experience that I think they would not readily have been tempted from the hospitable doors of Bultfontein a second time.

16th.—Mr. Barry, Judge of the High Court of Griqualand, came to visit the dry diggings, and took up his residence with us. His lordship quite enjoyed the camping life we led at this time, but the fleas puzzled him. A fearful hurricane of dust towards evening, through which the sunset glowed as never flames yet shone. All the Western world ablaze could not have equalled the awful glare. From the sky-line to the zenith all the heavens flared in an equal volume of scarlet heat. The dust rolled across like mighty wreaths of smoke. Though hell had broken through its bars, that sight could not have been outdone.

17th.—Left at 5.30 A.M. for Belmont, to visit Mr. Webb, who is reported worse. Mr. Jacklin kindly offered to give me a lift thither with three new horses, harnessed unicorn, which he had bought at New Rush market. As they had never seen each other before in their lives, nor had seen their master nor he them; as my friend did not know the disposition of any one amongst them; and as they certainly had not worked in unicorn fashion, any of the three, a gentleman who cared for his neck might have been justified in declining to drive down Bultfontein hill behind them. Before visiting this country I thought I entertained as much regard for my precious life as any man, but experience leads one

Digitized by Google

to self-knowledge. I found it in me to get up cheerfully, and bid good-bye without a quaver. Skirting the claims and never an inch to spare, we trotted down, and, barring several abortive efforts on the leader's part to spill us over an ant-hill, we reached Komering's in the best possible temper. I had so often passed this place that the dwellers therein had come as near to curiosity about me as boers can. Some passing joker, too, had informed them I was the sheriff, and the explanation was deemed satisfactory. The business of my office caused these frequent journeys. Just now they took it in their heads I was proceeding by a round-about road to Klipdrift, having it in charge to hang somebody, and being afraid of interception on my way. Most amusing to observe that the idea, popular in France, of our grand old office of a shire-reeve is also current in South Africa. By whom would such an impression be transmitted? But the worthy Komerings looked on me with an awful interest, thinking what experiences I had gone through while yet my beard was brown.

They had, indeed, but just recovered from an experience of their own, sufficiently startling. Farmer Komering, with four black servants, lately took the famed grey stallion, pride of his heart, to water at the dam. The leggy, weedy, vicious brute made such trouble, a thunder-cloud rolled up while yet he kicked, and plunged, and screamed, and bit by the dam side. Komering and his men were too much excited to heed the storm. It broke right over them, and the first flash struck the farmer and three men. The brute of a horse escaped. Komering was insensible for several hours, and still complained, three weeks later, of violent pains in his back. People still talk here of the awful accident at Pniel last Christmas, when eight Kaffirs, sleeping head to head in a bell tent, were struck, and only three escaped with life, crippled for ever.

Springbok abounded on the road towards the junction of the Mod and Riet rivers, by which drift we had resolved to cross. I fired at them with my usual luck, hitting one or two, but bringing

Digitized by Google

not a head to ground. Several times already I had made the solemnest of vows not to fire again, seeing I profited my dinner not at all, and inflicted useless cruelty on the poor antelopes. But the temptation always proved too strong. We found the Mod River low, but the Riet ran very strong. It was dangerous to cross with untried and queer-tempered horses. We visited the farmer at the drift, to consult his experience. This worthy gentleman was found at dinner, surrounded by a stalwart but dirty progeny. One bed-closet, one living-room, and a kitchen, the shanty contained, and the household must have been somewhat crowded at night. Dinner consisted of lumps of mutton fried, and a pudding of bread-stuff, with six raisins hid therein. As we sat by the door, all the eaters looked round somewhat proudly when this pudding was brought in, as who should say, "This is our lordly style!" I am bound to confess it was the first effort of the sort I had beheld since Christmas. There lay a rag in the middle of the table, to which every one applied his hands and mouth when so inclined. With this, the mutton plates were wiped by the eldest daughter. Then the pudding made itself to vanish in monstrous noggins, and the farmer, scrubbing his beard and face and hands with the rag, professed himself at our disposal for advice. It was this house where my friend B—— bought the peaches, which were measured out to him in a well-worn utensil of that class generally reserved for confidential employment.

The farmer strolled back with us along the little path, bounded by wild spinach and lovely flowering bulbs, which led to the drift. After long looking he pronounced the ford impracticable even for oxen. There was nothing to do but to wait, like Virgil's rustic, *dum defluat amnis*. Returning to the house, we purchased a leg of mutton at the extravagant price of one shilling. It was then and there hacked off from a gory carcass, suspended, dripping, in the kitchen. Lighting a fire of drift wood and juniper boughs, we roasted morsels of it in the blaze, and oh, ye *gourmets!* think not you have tasted mutton till

Digitized by Google

you have done it *à la mode aborigène.* Afterwards, I took my rifle and strolled up the banks of the Mod.

The stream extended wide beyond its common bounds, making a belt of stagnant, rotting water between the bosky slope and swollen current. Bushes stood shoulder deep therein. Below the high mud cliffs, and slanting down to the stilly flood, a thicket lay, broken with naked patches. In these a thousand bulbous roots thrust out their scanty leaves and stalks of flower. I started several hares and a vulture, the first of which plunged without hesitation overhead into the slack water. There were few birds, but every bough was thick with nests. I counted as many as fifteen in one small bush, not two feet high. Four hung to a single branch, a small one. I have counted more than this in such situations. So rare are trees throughout the country. It might have been thought that linnets and finches would learn to build in holes, seeing with what difficulty they find a branch suitable; but it is not so.

Stretched at length beneath a prickly tree, I watched the scanty life around. There was a score of bees, various of colour, buzzing in the blossoms of a giant clematis, three times as big and showy as our English species. Ground and branches were alive with ants, not remarkable in any way. A covey of yellow birds, handsomely coloured, lit above my head, and pecked the thin hard pods of seed. They flew off presently, but all the day through kept near us. No other living thing I saw. Snakes there were, no doubt, in multitudes around, but none displayed themselves upon the burning scraps of sand. It is remarkable that I never once saw a reptile in South Africa, except the common lizards.

The rivers fell fast all day, but the stone which is boer W——'s token, did not yet show above the flood. After another meal of exquisite mutton, we smoked, and lounged about, and watched the flowing river, and gossiped, until the sky assumed its pale green tint, and the sun went down in waves of fire. Half-a-dozen waggons had arrived by that time, and the travellers in them were

Digitized by Google

camped upon the upper ground. We rolled ourselves in kaross and rug to sleep. Scarcely settled, one became aware of fleas. Never at Bultfontein, where you might have thought the vermin of the earth were congregated, had I encountered such ferocious hosts. The sand was alive and moving with them. I, hardened by months of suffering, managed to sleep a little, brokenly; but poor Jacklin passed the night in wandering to and fro, scratching, undressing, and shaking his clothes. There was a very heavy dew. In the morning we found that the waggon-people had slept above our sandy bed. They doubtless knew what awful enemies awaited them below.

Sunday, 18th.—A roasting dawn! The river still fell, and our stone of promise showed its blessed back above the flood from time to time. There were carts assembled on the other side, and the Kaffirs belonging to them occasionally tried the water. None could yet advance more than a few yards. Went up to the farm and talked with Mr. W——. He had been a digger at Dutoits-pan, not without success. In fact, seeing he had turned out thirty diamonds, of which one brought £350, I asked why on earth he had not kept at the business. He carelessly replied that it was money enough, and besides, the children didn't thrive. He read to us the list of his finds, with the prices realised. One he sold for half-a-crown, several for five shillings. Others brought one pound to twenty. On the whole, he cleared something like £500. But he said, with a laugh, that the koopers had not paid him one-tenth part of the value, as he afterwards discovered. The shyness of the boers, their dislike of Englishmen, and their half-savage distrust of an interpreter, are taken advantage of by the bagmen, or small buyers. It is amusing to hear the devices by which these fellows get their confidence. They shake the boer's hand violently, ask after his wife—all are married—say they knew his father or his grandmother well, and inquire about his maiden aunt. The simple fellows never distrust this sort of thing. They give the man all the information he wants, pay no attention to grotesque mis-

Digitized by Google

takes, and finally part with their diamonds at any price to so old and true a friend of their family. Mr. W—— told us some good stories of this sort. A few months' residence with other men, and fair success in digging, had brightened his wits, of which he possessed abundance. He made us laugh greatly—though I only enjoyed the joke through Mr. Jacklin's interpretation—at the tale of a kooper, who had gone through the regular course of make-believe acquaintance with him, and whom Mr. W—— suddenly recollected as a *bonâ fide* friend of one of his brothers. The kooper became suspicious at the moment, and, suspecting "some game," flatly denied his own identity, and went away grumbling. The largest stone, W., having gained costly experience, took to Mr. Webb, and sold at an honest price. Thereafter, he came away. There are hundreds of diggers, both boer and colonial, who have gone to the fields with the resolve of earning some definite sum, large or small. Having made that, they retire on the best terms procurable.

Back at the river side, we found it thronged with people. After many slips and falls, a gigantic Mozambiquer had got across. Three or four white men, and a dozen Kaffirs, were balancing themselves upon the slippery rocks, breathlessly laughing and shouting. Every instant one would souse down overhead, and loud was the roar of merriment. Then, on the further bank, appeared a crowd of Barolong Kaffirs, armed with knife and *knob-kerry*, on their way to get work at the fields. These paused a moment to strip off the faded soldiers' coats which were their only garment, and walked into the water hand in hand. Screaming with laughter and excitement, they pushed through, one party splashing and upsetting another. Arrived on the hither bank, some bounded off light as hares, with shrieks of delight. Others attempted to prevent their friends from landing; others, wild with excitement, danced a war-dance on the sand, flourishing their *knobkerries*, throwing them up, and catching them. Then some oxen were driven in, and stuck, refusing to go further. They

Digitized by Google

bellowed like distant thunder. Every one in this country holds it a privilege and a duty to bear a hand when oxen or horses get into difficulty, and a crowd of volunteers stripped to drive the cattle. About noon, we found the river passable for vehicles, and went across, the water over our wheel tires. Before doing so, we had taken the opportunity to bathe, and rid ourselves of fleas. I caught forty-three amongst my clothes, besides some that escaped, and some that tickled me all day. My companion captured sixty-nine. Think of that, you gentlemen of England, who sit at home at ease! How little do you think upon the danger of the fleas!

Clockfontein, 3.30 P.M.—Why so called no man knows. It's true there is a time-piece on the mantel-shelf, which does not go, by-the-bye. This is a handsome house, painted after a fashion which never was seen before on earth save in the oldest of Old English missals, wherein King Solomon is represented sitting in a gamboge doorway with pea-green columns, in front of a cerulean dome, brightened with scarlet mouldings. I have always doubted the truth of this colouring, in spite of the opinion of my friend, Mr. Thomas Wright, holding that human life could not be supported in such parti-coloured surroundings. But Clockfontein at least convinced me that man—and woman—can fatten under gaudier walls. Here we regaled upon such figs and grapes as only Africa produces, and learnt the opinion upon general subjects of the two young painters who had produced these startling effects of colour. They had bargained to make the house as magnificent as paint itself for £50, and to do up all the farmer's waggons to correspond at £10 apiece. They asked if we thought their money well-earned, and I replied with sincere enthusiasm that theirs was the most honest job I had ever witnessed. I told them I had not thought there was so much gorgeous colour in the world, or so many. They modestly replied that the combinations had given them some trouble, especially the different hues of orange. The worthy fellows then confided to me some secrets of their art, in the item of mixing yellows and reds, which

Digitized by Google

I would rather die than tell, though all the forty dropped upon their knees to beg of me. Paracelsus refused to leave in writing the most potent evocations of the devil; Faraday, or somebody, who re-discovered the aqua tofana, declined with horror to record its composition; so I, hearing these horrid secrets, will keep the woeful knowledge to myself.

Drove on towards Belmont. Our horses now began to show their little vices strongly. Crossing a belt of thorny ground, which grew along a barren ridge, the leader insisted upon running into every bush. Checked, he began to jib, then to stop short, then to turn at right angles. It came on to rain in torrents. We outspanned, thinking a rest might cheer the creatures up. They then proceeded to hobble off as far as their tethered legs would let them. Inspanned again with the leader fastened on alongside. All the three then kicked and plunged like furies. Spanned the leader to the pole, and put another alongside; the latter proceeded at right angles, snorting and rearing. Spanned them this fashion—that fashion—every fashion that harmonical progression would allow. Raining like a sieve. Gave up the fight at last, and turned back towards Honeynest Kloof, the horses going not a bit more pleasantly in the new direction.

Thus, turning up a sloot-like track, we headed for a hill that looked like the refuse heap of a stone quarry overgrown with scrub. It was a lofty hill of pebbles, burnt in volcanic fires, polished by wind and rain, and summer's burning heat. At the foot, in a green patch of weeds, stood a little house of three rooms. Here dwelt a farmer, Mr. Barnard, not a wealthy man, but a warm-hearted gentleman. We drove to his door, wet through, tired with fighting the horses, hungry, and out of temper. He greeted us as friends, easily and warmly; took our horses through the pouring rain to kraal; helped to unpack the cart, and behaved more like a good Samaritan than any Gentile creature. His smiling, portly wife made us equally welcome; left us her room to change in; announced supper as nearly ready. By my life, I

Digitized by Google

resolved then and there, to suppress the worser half of my comments upon the boer population for their sake. And I have done so. But, be it observed, Barnard, like Albertyne, is a French name.

We had supper, and talked and smoked till nine o'clock, then turned in upon the floor. Our kind host and hostess, with the baby, occupied the closet, in which there was just room for a bed. The other children, who were beautiful in feature and expression, but caked with dirt, rolled themselves in the antelope skins upon the floor. Every one in the house went to sleep in their daily garments. There were no fleas; and words could not tell the comfort of this quietude to me.

The morning dawned with mist and fog. Our host and we turned up, and washed in a bowl. The children enjoyed no such luxury or extravagance that I saw. Strolled up the kloof and found a fine dam at the summit, a regular tarn. Set off about six A.M., unicorn fashion again. Desperate contests, now with one of the team, now another, and now with all the lot at once. Inspanned them every way, and no way would answer. At length turned the oldest of them loose upon the veldt, and drove along with a pair. I found the secret of making them go was to howl and scream at them. I was hoarse for a week afterwards. I believe they thought it was a leopard they were carrying.

We drove through a host of foot-gangers on the trek. These are the larvæ of the locust, much more dreaded than the full-grown insect. They remain without wings for three years, moving about the country in the multitudes so often described. It is the foot-ganger who defies all efforts to keep him from the crops. The winged locust is turned aside by smoke, nor, stopping only the night to feed, has he time to make the ruin which is proverbial. The foot-ganger marches steadily on, devouring the ground. If flames meet him, he extinguishes them by thrusting a million comrades into the blaze. If a river cross his course, though it be the broad Orange itself, he swims across, supported on a raft of comrades drowned. Though billions be sacrificed, he never feels

Digitized by Google

the diminution of his host. I have heard of armies five miles wide and three in depth. The hindmost feed upon their weaker brethren. One only means is there to stop the foot-ganger, and this is too expensive for common use. Crops walled in merely, have no exemption, but if the wall be topped by a horizontal ledge of tin, the frightful plague is stayed. It climbs up the wall like a man-of-war, but the overhanging surface bothers it. Unable to walk head downwards, it falls amongst its fellows, who immediately eat it up. The farmer behind surveys the cannibal throng with ecstatic triumph. Millions are devoured before the ranks separate to encircle the protected spot. Those foot-gangers we met belonged to the handsome gaudy species. They were about two inches long, strikingly arrayed in stripes of yellow, green, and black. There is another, smaller, and yet more dreaded, which cannot boast such a fine livery.

We also passed through a district haunted by a species of "forest-fly" like our English *Dolichopus cyaneus* in essential respects. It had the same clinging, clammy feet, the same imbecile and disgusting tameness, the same predilection for revolving on its head with marvellous rapidity, the same tenacity of life. But, though addicted from early youth to entomology, I never noticed in our forest-fly one curious peculiarity of this species. If you take the female of this South African insect in your hand and squeeze it with the utmost gentleness, it leaves a gigantic egg within your grasp and sails away bodiless. In fact, the abdomen of the insect is just this egg enveloped in a scarlet skin. To kill these filthy pests by any sudden process is impossible. I will confess an antipathy against their twinkling, sticky feet in any clime. Attempt to crush the brute, and it is up your sleeve or revolving round your neck in an instant. Take off its scarlet head, and the body sits quietly down and plunges in a melancholy yet animated retrospect.

After alarums and excursions innumerable, reached Belmont at noon. No one could be more surprised than were Jacklin and myself to light at that ever-hospitable door sound in limb and nerves.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN AFRICAN FARM-HOUSE.

Belmont; its scenery, house, garden, dams, and general pleasantness—Considerations on the matter of a bridge across the Orange—Appointment of the Land Commission—Eight grounds of title anticipated—A Russian Princess at the fields—Story of the eighty-eight carat diamond hawked round Klipdrift—To Pniel by transport waggon—Bultfontein again—Boy struck by lightning—My nine and a-half carat diamond splits—Supervision of the claims ordered at last—General flight of fraudulent diggers—Claims put up to auction—Story of the *Cambrian's* homeward voyage—Humours of the digging passengers—Fights, challenges, and alarms—Large diamonds.

Belmont, Albania, Feb. 20.

SIXTY miles behind, lie those wonderful, wearisome diamond-fields. Rivers flow between us, and purple mountains rise, and grassy plains stretch their slow length along in green and dun and blue perspective. Not once to-day has the word diamond been pronounced. No rattle of sieve is in our ears; not a man boasts of his claim or curses fortune; not one amongst the cattle yonder, pensively grouped about the dam, not a horse or mule in the crowded stockyard, is shuddering at thought of dangers past or dreaming of to-morrow's peril amongst the crumbling roads. For some few hours I dwell in a farm-house, fêted with hospitality as true, as simple, and as free as in Galway's self. No English farmer has a scene before his door such as I look on, but the spot possesses its own charm. Fancy a hollow some five acres in extent, surrounded on three-fourths of its circumference by hills. They are neither green slopes, as at home, nor tinted granite peaks, such as one sees in a mountain land. Their

Digitized by Google

frame is igneous rock, of which the surface has split up into a thousand monstrous pebbles, now worn smooth and shiny by attrition of the whirling sand. In the small cracks that intervene, a few poor thorns find space for their hardy roots. At foot of such a hill the house is placed, a structure of one floor, with a small wing on either side projecting. The rooms are very lofty, mounting up to the roof. The front door opens on the "living" room, some twenty feet by eighteen, furnished with a massy table down its length, not one whit too spacious for the farmer's hospitality. The furniture is such as would be seen in a comfortable house at home, save for the skins and peltries everywhere thrown down. A kaross of silver jackal fur adorns the sofa, and another covers the big arm-chair; a very carpet of jackal skin lies under the window; the hide of a monstrous lynx is cast across a chair. The ottoman bears a wild cat's trophy; on the wall hangs an eagle's wing, and the floor is strewn with hides of antelope. Outside the door, beyond the stoop, whereof the pavement is of flat stones fitted together, stand four orange-trees within their fence; planted but three years ago, they are already as many feet high. The space in front is all yellow sand, as unpromising for crops as well might be, but the green and flourishing garden, standing within its pomegranate fence below, shows what may be done with this unlikely soil if only water be poured through it. There will the proud proprietor display to you—besides his peas and beans, his peaches, figs, melons, and tomatoes, his apples and pears and potatoes, his roses, hollyhocks, jasmines, and the rest—English poplars growing three feet high in one twelvemonth, an olive-shoot outdoing Italy, cork slips making Spain ashamed. For the opportunity to try experiments that have so well succeeded, he is in debt to Dr. Hooker, of Kew Gardens, whose long arm, showering and grasping seeds with a like eagerness, stretches to every land my wanderings have shown to me. All around this pleasant place there is the sight of water, that one fertiliser, for the want of which this country pines in sad and colourless array.

Digitized by Google

There is a "dam" in which we bathe on the nearest hill, another beyond; one boundary of the open space is the rough stone embankment of a third, smothered in wild water-melon and burr-plants. All these are hollows, deepened and banked up to catch the streams of rain. At bottom of the yard, beside the garden which it moistens, is a sheet of spring-water. The banks thereof it is a delight to watch. Even in the sultry noonday, when the hillside pebbles shine as tipped with diamonds, when each rocky outline quivers with the heat, and shadows fall upon the sand as keen as blades of steel, there is life and motion round the spring. Oxen stream across the rise to drink, lazily followed by tatterdemalion Hottentots. Kaffirs, naked, or clad in old soldiers' coats cast off, lie on their stomachs at the brink and dip black muzzles in the pool. Strings of little nigger children, girt about with a piece of tape, pass from the huts behind, bearing buckets which they fill leisurely. Ducks swim to and fro, enticing often their wild brothers to join the cruise. In the evening all the sandy banks are white with sheep, which troop up timidly behind the careless goats, afraid to follow, but still more afraid to lag astern. Then the whole *caballada* of horses gallop furiously by, pursued by Hottentot centaurs, to their kraal. And, when the last sun-ray has vanished, and dark steals on us, it is but gradually that the noise and bustle dies away. We go to our evening meal, and return to the pleasant stoop, finding a perfect stillness round. The pointers of the Southern Cross blaze out, and show the four dim stars that cheered the Spaniard's faith. High up in the clear blue sky hangs old Orion, still faithful to the wanderer in every zone. Each after each a million lamps take light, until it seems as though the jealous stars were striving to outshine our paltry diamonds of earth. The stillness is broken only by our voices, by the bleat of a frightened lamb, and by the quivering twitter of the crickets. The song of the lotus eater rhythmically lingers in my ear,—

"There is no joy but calm."

Digitized by Google

21st.—Across the river to Hopetown at six A.M. Though I fear colonists will accuse me of throwing cold water on their pet schemes of public utility, the project of a bridge across the Orange at this point is one which I think sound. I am told that an English contractor has estimated the expense at £120,000 for a solid structure of stone. Engineering calculations have not fallen within my study, and I should not think of disputing the opinion of an expert, without figures in hand, had he formed it on the spot. But as this is not the case, I cannot withhold the belief that the sum stated would be found to fall very, very short. The spot where it is proposed to build the bridge has indeed a good stony stratum. It would not be needful to cut the high mud-banks. But granting that we now could work much cheaper than in those days when Waterloo Bridge was founded, it is to be remembered, on the other hand, that all building material must be carried over a country the most extravagant in the world for transport. I do not venture to estimate these differences, but, remembering that our own Waterloo bridge cost £1,000,000, I cannot think that a substantial structure would be raised at this point for less than £500,000, perhaps not for three times the sum.

Even at this figure the scheme might give a dividend. The two ponts now at work above and below the town return not less than £20 a-day apiece, on an average. The traffic constantly increases. A bridge would draw away that large proportion of it which now goes round by the Hook, an attraction I should personally deplore, as opposed to the interests of my good friend, Mr. Gers. The bridge tolls, at present rates, could not yield less than £50 a-day, and might, perhaps, exceed this figure were the charge reduced. And Sundays would not be almost blank as they are now. A suspension bridge, therefore, would undoubtedly pay well. It could not easily cost above £120,000, and the interest on this sum would be most satisfactory. I do not understand how there can be wasted even a thought upon the stone bridge. Both in cheapness and in safety the sus-

Digitized by Google

pension structure will defy comparison. Local estimates put the expense at £30,000 only.

Found Mr. Webb happily eating figs in a dark room. The Land Commission is appointed at last, to survey the territory annexed, and adjudicate upon all claims to it. The Commissioners are, Mr. Orpen, Magistrate of Backhaus, chief, Mr. Buyskes, and Mr. T. H. Bowker. Their instructions are to "receive, examine, and enregister claims to land in the territory of Griqualand West, and also to ascertain and report, for His Excellency's information, what land should, in their opinion, be reserved and set apart for the use and occupation of the native inhabitants and for public purposes. His Excellency anticipates that the Commissioners will receive applications for title under seven grounds of claim.—1: there are the individual Griquas, who plead immemorial right, and specific grant from Waterboer. 2: the native families or communities called kraals, belonging to many broken nations, such as Griquas, Korannas, Bechuanas, Basutos, Batlapins, &c., who have occupied certain lands in common. For all these people, care must be taken to provide sufficiently. 3: the persons who enjoy a grant of land from the Griqua government, older than the acceptance of the territory by Her Majesty; this refers to British subjects, who emigrated to Albania in 1867, and subsequently, on the invitation of Waterboer's government. My friends at Belmont come under this category. 4: purchasers, or alleged purchasers, of land from Griquas and other native occupiers. 5: purchasers or grantees from the Free State and the Transvaal. 6: holders of grants from Jantje, or other natives claiming portions of the country, or from their alleged agents. 7: persons who plead "beneficial occupation," in other words, squatters. Here are jurisdictions and claims enough to employ three unfortunate Commissioners for the term of their life, one would think. But there are more difficult inquiries behind. On the left bank of the Vaal one finds the ever-green memory of Kornelis Kok. Many farms in this part are alleged to have been granted by him, or by

Digitized by Google

his subjects, to people of the Transvaal Republic. It will be, perhaps, the most delicate of all the Commissioners' duties to ascertain the substantial truth of these assertions. There is no intention of harsh dealing towards those who prove to have been *bonâ fide* purchasers, but it is believed that many will be found to show no rights that can bear examination. Several documents of this class, submitted to the arbitration, have been already proved forgeries, on the indisputable testimony of their water-mark. Mr. Orpen is a determined man, but half-savage boers from the Transvaal are not scrupulous in any matter. So bitter is the hatred these people bear to England, that they have lately refused to feed and water the post-horses, though under contract to do so. 8: and last of all the claimants, come those who rest their case upon the grants of Major Warden, so frequently referred to.

The great news in Hopetown is of a Russian Princess, who passed through this in a sort of menagerie-van yesterday. She is going to the diamond fields just like anybody else. Russian princesses and Russian mysteries are alike common; not to be credited in any sense for the most part. But this lady, whoever she be, is an unaccountable person. Not to return to the subject again, I may mention here that she took out a tent-stand on Dutoitspan, where she dwelt in the van, with a maid-servant and a black boy, who treated her with great deference, and there she perhaps dwells now, neither digging nor buying diamonds. Armed with an autograph letter from Lord Granville, supplemented by the recommendation of Sir H. Barkly, she receives the greatest attention from our magistrates and officials. Mr. P——, it is stated, interprets the high instructions addressed to him as exacting a daily call, and his escort in a promenade. The common story makes her out a lady of very high rank, exiled from Russia for four years. The Foreign Office letter gives no clue at all, nor do I think the authorities at Capetown are better informed than we.

An acquaintance, returning to Capetown—in the mood, I fear,

Digitized by Google

for cursing diamonds and all who sell them—told me the story of the eighty-eight carat found at Klipdrift recently. I afterwards took pains to investigate this famous tale, and I can guarantee the following version. A loafer about Klipdrift camp, strolling by the river-side, noticed a pebble of unusual appearance amongst the refuse of a claim long deserted. Picked up, it proved to be a chocolate-coloured stone, very nearly round, rough coated, but seeming to be transparent under the film. There were bright points that glittered in it, like the sparks in so-called "fire-stones." Such a curious pebble it was, the loafer thought it must have value, and carried it to the town. All who saw admired, and confessed they had not yet beheld a mineral so striking. "Rot your curiosities," cried the loafer, "who'll give me ten shillings for it?" None answered this practical question. "Say a bottle of beer!" entreated the loafer; but none replied. All the round of Klipdrift canteens this curious pebble passed, but no bottle of beer was offered. Deeply swearing, the drouthy finder turned away, and met an acquaintance of indifferent repute. Says he, "Here's a new sort of precious stone, and not a blank son of a something will give me a bottle of beer for it." Acquaintance looked, was also impressed. Says he, "Let's ask Unger what it is." They were just opposite that worthy's canvas shop. Door and window stood open, and the kooper sat within, engaged in a bargain with two diggers. The acquaintance thrust his arm through the open window, dropped the pebble before Mr. Unger's nose, and asked, "What d'ye call that, Mister?" The merchant gave it a glance, and passed it back,—"A diamond," says he. Great excitement on the part of acquaintance, sullen distrust on the part of loafer. "I don't believe it," growls the latter. "Why, I've offered that there marble, which must be near a hundred carats, over all Klipdrift, for a bottle of beer! and no one would have it! A diamond? Damn!"

"I think so, too," says acquaintance. "Damn these koopers.

Digitized by Google

They's all liars. But it's a precious stone, mate, I've no doubt of that. Come, now, I'll give you a pound a carat, and chance it!"

"Done with a fool!" cried loafer, ready to burst with secret delight.

So the money was raised within an hour and paid. Eighty-eight carats weighed the stone, and eighty-eight pounds duly passed. Within a few hours the loafer concluded he was badly "done," and demanded back his marble. No use. He then lodged an action against acquaintance, on the imperfect legal plea that "an inadequate price" had been paid.

It presently came out, if we may believe *ex post facto* statements, that the owner of the claim in which, after disuse, this diamond was found, had twice taken it up and marvelled at it, but never thought of testing it. The gentleman who first told me the tale, who had, indeed, left Klipdrift in the highest of the excitement, stated that he also had picked up just such another pebble once, at the boat landing. He carried it in his pocket for some weeks, but was at length tempted to try the article in that very primitive manner still credited with many diggers. Outside Benning and Martin's hotel, in Dutoitspan, he one day placed it on a stone, and struck it with another, using all his force. It flew into countless pieces, as would the Koh-i-noor, if fairly hit, under the same circumstances.

I tell the story to show how rarely the Brazilian "skin" is found upon Cape stones, and how rude is the knowledge of our most experienced diggers. The koopers are no better informed, seldom so well. What treasures may have been passed over as was this eighty-eight carat!

Dined with E——t, who starts for an eighteen months' excursion into the interior to-morrow. Thus does he celebrate his accession to another comfortable fortune. At night, the passenger-waggon came up *en route* for the fields. In it I found our two young officers of the *Cambrian*, together with a fellow-passenger of that memorable voyage, who have all been home and returned since I bade them

Digitized by Google

farewell in Saldanha Bay. The waggon was full of young fellows going up, and we had also a lady and two noisy babies. The poor little things might well be cross and irritable, after eight days' travel, but we did not bless them.

22nd.—Started at seven A.M., paying £3 to Pniel. After halt an hour's journey, returned for a fiddle. The waggon was like a ship's armoury. Not less than ten fire-arms had we on board, not to count revolvers. Never was seen such a formidable cohort as ours, when we descended to stalk a pigeon. All boers and farmers had treated the party with great respect, except Mr. Devinish, whose conceit they had a good deal humbled by "jumping" a team of his mules, when refused cattle for the journey. All this day and the next we drove through the eternal plains, over thin grey grass and barren sand; through sloot, and belt of thorn, and arid breaks among the hills. Crossed the Riet River, by a drift rarely used. The alarm of these new-comers amused one. A month from this, and the most nervous will not feel a throb at greater perils. Reached Pniel at dark, having actually passed within a morning's walk of Dutoitspan, as I have so often pointed out.

24th.—The fare by passenger from Pniel has been raised to £1. I stopped at New Rush, lunching at "The Gridiron," where three young gentlemen of quality have set up a chop-house. Met an old schoolfellow, who works three claims from mine with great success. From a space 30 ft. by 7½ ft. he has turned out something over 350 carats. Luck has followed this pleasant fellow wherever he has worked. Saw a monstrous stone of 62 carats, but slightly off-colour, and as clear as glass. Returned through Dutoitspan in the afternoon. A terrible storm of wind and rain and thunder. Whilst sheltering in a house upon the market square, the most awful flash of lightning I ever saw in any climate, the most awful that could be, broke on us. At the same moment a little boy tried to cross the street to reach his mother, standing in a shop. The lightning caught him midway, wrapped him in a

Digitized by Google

sheet of fire, and threw him headlong ten or fifteen feet, a blackened, mangled corpse. The screams of the mother almost outrang the dread artillery of heaven.

Arrived at Bultfontein; found bad news awaiting me as before. My beautiful 9½ carat, the pride of my heart, had cracked. It had been in my own possession nearly two months.

The Commissioners have at length attended to Mr. Fry's applications for a man to inspect the working claims. After refusing to take the duty on themselves, and refusing also to let Mr. Fry undertake it, they have yielded at last, and sent an inspector this Saturday afternoon. Beginning at the house, he captured three unlicensed parties in a very few moments, and sent them to prison. The claims they were working are amongst the best on the kopje, and the bystanders instantly jumped them. Mr. Fry, however, was present, and he insisted on the proclamation being carried out. The crowd assembled made violent opposition, but the Company's manager carried his point. The three were successively put up to auction on the spot, and eagerly disputed. The best, a claim most excellently and scientifically worked, brought £16; the others £9 and £5 each. Had due notice been given, these prices would probably have been quadrupled. It is to be hoped that henceforward this most necessary duty of inspection will not be so shamefully neglected. It will be borne in mind that for every shilling lost to Government by their own default, nine are lost to the proprietors. But it is unfortunate that the energy of our officials manifested itself on a Saturday afternoon. Many of the culprits were not at work, and every one besides the unhappy three completed his preparations for a bolt on the Sunday.

25th.—A gathering of friends to-day. Amongst them a young relative of Mr. Fry, one of our lucky diggers. He confesses £10,000 cleared upon these fields. It seems that the homeward voyage of the *Cambrian* was almost as fruitful of adventure as our outward passage. Not to be outdone in "enterprise" by the

Digitized by Google

agent at Southampton, the agent at Capetown filled the fore-saloon with cargo, and put the second-class passengers, diggers for the most part, to sleep in the smoking-room. These gentlemen usually passed their evenings in audibly matching each other to fight some individual of the first-class party. "I *say*," one would remark emphatically, "as you, John, are a better man than the chap dealing over yonder,—you're easier on your legs, and happier with your hands, and you ain't got that damn would-yer-believe-it sort of way on you. Now I'm the best man"—or the second best, according to individuality—"aboard this vessel, and I'll bet you for a matter of twenty pounds to fight that there cur, and if he's the man to try I'll stake the money. But he ain't, John. They be a dirty lot!" So pleasant were things made by the energy of the Capetown agent! But our digger friends—who, by the way, disposed of diamonds in every direction with marvellous liberality, raffled them, sold them, and gave them to all the ladies who would accept—were not deficient in humour. In one of the frequent rows abroad, for the discontent of the saloon spread to the forecastle, a sailor had to be placed in irons. The chief digger was much interested, hearing of this, and burned with curiosity to see the mode of execution. He made a steward drunk, put his watch two hours fast, and sent him into the smoking-room, where all the passengers sat at cards, to turn out the light. This the man duly performed, tipsily, regardless of frantic remonstrance. The first officer ordered the lights to be restored, and the steward, prompted by his perfidious friend, reported that magnate to the officer of the watch. Thereupon the victim was immediately clapped in irons and set upon the bridge, to the intensest delight of the digger, who slept in an arm-chair, the whole night through, beneath him, and solaced him with tenderest inquiries. Besides these pleasant diversions, there were two fights, regular rough-and-tumble, all round fisticuffs, and two formal challenges delivered. Likewise, assault and battery was committed at St. Helena, one party of gentlemen pelting another on the beach. Shall we

Digitized by Google

blame any of the unfortunates for this and other scandals? Certainly not. I know some who were concerned in these discreditable rows, and I know them to be quiet, well-behaved, and peaceful fellows. The Union Company is responsible. Men went aboard the *Cambrian* with anger and anxiety, obliged to go, but hating and dreading the vessel and the voyage. They came prepared for an uncomfortable passage, and they made it.

On Monday, saw another sixty-two carat, a fragment or section of a monstrous gem, which was surely three hundred carats. It was wonderfully bright and clear, but very yellow. Saw also a *made* stone, ninety-three carats, badly flawed. Going into M. Mège's office, where it lay upon the table, I actually took it for an inkstand, it being, of course, triangular. Both these came from Dutoitspan.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIV.

LIFE AT THE FIELDS.

Healthiness of the fields—Speculations as to the number of souls in Dutoitspan camp—In Bultfontein—Anxious look out—Increasing population and activity of trade—New roads, squares, and streets—Churches in Dutoitspan—Newspapers—The James Kopje rush a fiasco—Not a stone discovered—Messrs. Sonnenberg decline to purchase—A morning's employment in Bultfontein House—Varied duties—Another raid amongst the claims—I resolve to go home—Applications to us for a little sleep—Agitation at New Rush touching the Stand Licenses—Immense loss of landowners by the present system—They offer to grant leases—Refuse to grant a monthly license—Formation of a Mutual Defence Association amongst standholders—Threats of ejectment from proprietors—The diggers take part in the dispute—Their opinion upon general politics—The diggers' case, *pro* and *contra*, impartially stated—Renewed proceedings against the late rioters—The Crown at fault for want of evidence—Angry threats of the digging population—Increasing size of Dutoitspan camp—Boer women; their figures, faces, kopjes, and crinolines—Cost of living on the fields in February, 1872.

FEB. 27th.—I think there is more sickness just now than at the time of my arrival. But it is a trifling matter. Beyond a doubt, these fiery but open plains are amongst the healthiest parts of the world. We have everything to contend against: reckless disregard of sanitary rules on the diggers' part, and somewhat lax supervision from the police; bad food, insufficiency of vegetables, bad drink, and too much of it; debilitated constitution on the part of many people; empirical doctoring, and not enough of that; drugs of a bad class, and a woeful deficiency of them; lack of all strengthening and tempting diet. The kindness of men to one another is no novelty in such-like situations.

Digitized by Google

I know of parties which have kept an invalid for months,—more than a year in a certain case, feeding and doctoring him with every care the fields could furnish, never leaving him alone. The mortality, considering all things, is astonishingly small. But nine died last week, of grown men, whether by accident or disease, in all this camp, of no one knows how many thousand inhabitants, tent-dwellers, in an atmosphere polluted by open wells of filth, and carcases decaying. Children suffer more, as would be expected, but there do not appear to be so many of them as formerly. I am glad to see that a girls' school is to be opened to-morrow. Though it be not a ladies' college, and the principal bear no eminent degree,—which, however, is by no means impossible, and I know nothing against it,—the school will at least teach the children lessons never learnt before in a land but lately a savage wilderness.

I have been endeavouring to ascertain the number of our population here, quite without success. The digging parties on Dutoitspan, *paying license*, are at this moment something over 700; if we calculate five to each party, I think we shall scarcely be out. This would give 3,500 diggers. There are besides 400 free claims, which would not average so high; say 1,500. Likewise there is the population which digs without a license, of numbers utterly unknown, but scarcely less, I think, than 500 souls. Thus reckoning, we have 5,500 men upon the kopje. Add to these 2,500 women, children, storekeepers, loafers, servants, &c. &c. &c., the camp rises to 10,000 souls. Besides these, the kopje of Bultfontein has about 200 licensed diggers, at an average of three to the party, 600 men; wives, children, and other non-combatants, as many more, say 1,500 in all, who may be included in the camp of Dutoitspan. The population would thus reach 11,500. The Government officials believe they have about 15,000 under their rule, which is probably over the mark. But if we add the outlying tents, which dot every roadside from the kopje, something between my estimate and that of the magistrate would be

Digitized by Google

found correct. Although the new arrivals now approach 100 per diem, the camp does not swell with such rapidity. Many are leaving; some to enjoy their hard-earned wealth, some in disgust, many ill, and many in fear of illness. But a great English emigration has set in, and the population may be expected to grow more swiftly every week. It is an anxious prospect before the Commissioners. Already there appears an increase of alarming rapidity in the number of beggars and loafers. Sir H. Barkly has no less charge upon his mind than the means of supporting 50,000 paupers during the winter at hand, and, although this alarm at Capetown is exaggerated, I think that facts justify great anxiety. Of this subject I shall treat in a final chapter.

Whatever the feelings with which we regard the future—who, from *behind* the scenes, impartially survey the game—trade never was more active than at present. Mr. Fry has found it necessary to lay out another street in Dutoitspan, besides a square around the new Dutch church. The direction of this latest road is parallel to Main Street, but behind it, nearer the claims. There are but four old sites vacant, *erven*, as they are called, in the town, and these are unoccupied only because of disputed rights. The fifteen *erven* around the church are eagerly disputed, even before allotment. It is probable that they will be put up to auction. I may mention here that we have four churches in Dutoitspan at this time, English, Calvinistic, Roman Catholic, and Independent —very. The officiating minister at the last-named is a watchmaker. The proportion of Roman Catholics in this part of the colony is surprisingly large, but from the limited area of their church I must suppose that they are not fervent worshippers. Large their number is by comparison only. One would not have expected any Papists at all in a land so thoroughly Dutch. There are two newspapers in this camp, the *Diamond News*, and the *Diggers' Gazette*, conducted with diligence and fair ability, but *not* amusing. A third newspaper, the *Diamond Field*, is published at Klipdrift. There is none at New Rush.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Justice Barry, the judge of the High Court, has been staying with us at Bulfontein, waiting the arrival of his wife and family. They duly drove up last night, and left to-day, at five A.M., for Klipdrift. This does not appear to show that Government is inclined to notice our complaints of its distant metropolis. Mr. Barry and the other officials are preparing for residence.

The Newest Rush, that on the Boshoff Road, has come to the usual fiasco. Not a single diamond the diggers discovered, whatever be the truth about surface finds. Messrs. Sonnenberg withdrew from their bargain when the time of option ended; and of three thousand men who had applied for licenses, but one raised his voice when Captain Rorke formally opened office. I should think this was the same indefatigable fellow who persevered two months in digging all alone on the last new rush, and was only ejected by an action for trespass.

A morning spent at home in Bultfontein House always brings me occupation in the company's affairs. Many a drove of oxen have I taken charge of, driven up from the dam in pledge for water rights unpaid. Many a horse tied up and held against all comers, found trespassing. Many a dispute settled, and many a foolish question gravely answered. The creditors of the Company, whose balance always proved to lie the other way, have drunkenly stated their case in the doorway whilst I sat writing. Always, always, it would seem, some of our people were doing acts of atrocious illegality and injustice, and the gigantic victim trotted up to Bultfontein to lay his grievance before any person he found there. Few English-speaking diggers had complaints of this sort. It was always a puzzled boer, white with wrath and nervousness, who came and blocked the sunny entrance with his huge proportions. In these cases I used to sally out and secure the first passer-by to interpret. A little patience and explanation settled all that came before me, and it was pleasant to find that I could so easily be useful to my hosts. Sitting at home this day, for instance, before the breakfast things were cleared—by the way

Digitized by Google

we have a Madras coolie, six feet high, as cook, who owns a little brown wife with nose-rings—a boer woman stalked across with a parcel of diamonds for sale. She works just opposite, with her husband, two sons, and a Kaffir girl. Many a time have I seen this family toiling through rain and whirling storm of dust, and respected their resolution doubly, seeing it is most like they hold a barren farm at home to pay the mortgages on which they have treked hither. Buyers are scarce, and the good dame, seeing me so often, thought I might be tempted. Her dismissed, in no long time a stalwart youth, full six feet six in height, with limbs like the young Alcides, and open English face, though it had never browned in English sun, came to ask the simple question, How many claims he might be allowed to work upon one license? To him succeeded a dam-keeper, who brought up two horses and three oxen, captured from a drove of fifty or more, found drinking at the dam without a *briefje*. He claimed fifteen shillings ransom, the amount for all the oxen that had escaped. I did not well see how one could legally hold the hostages, but accepted the charge. Then a photographer visited me, in part to bring some views I had ordered, in part to complain that his excellent claim on Dutoitspan had been confiscated by Mr. Fry's order, on the ground that the space was included in an *erf*, or tent site.—N.B. This proved to be a slight misstatement; it was the bit of ground on which his Kaffirs "sorted" which was rightfully taken from him, on application of the erf-holder.—Then arrived a "boy" looking after the horses. He alleged that the oxen belonged to a different party, except five of them. After long dispute, I allowed him to take one horse and the oxen, he paying the due confessed. His successor was the chief of the party which had bought a confiscated claim at the auction last Saturday. He wished to know how far he might encroach upon the space reserved around the house—sixty feet. I told him not an inch, and he straightway departed to cover three feet of our sacred soil. Perceiving this, I made various excursions and forays upon him, thrusting

Digitized by Google

back his heaps, foot by foot, until they reached the proper margin. In this manner passed the day. At night arrived the owner of the second horse, but Mr. Fry was there to tackle him. My spider, or Mr. Martin's rather, has at length arrived, the horses none the worse, though rather poor. The sight of them relieved me from no small anxiety, for I cannot tell what damages I might justly have incurred by the loss of them.

The inspector of Dutoitspan is waking up at length. He has paraded the claims to-day, and arrested several unlicensed parties. This raid, however, should have been conducted simultaneously on all the kopjes, and in great force. Not one in ten will be captured, working in such slow and formal manner.

28th.—Resolved to go home at once. Sold my furniture and fixings to Mr. Fry, and made other preparations. Dr. Dyer, the Medical Inspector, came up, asking leave to lie down for awhile. The heat, the noise, the fleas, and the discomfort of his tent had made him ill. We are used to such requests, we lucky dogs who sleep beneath a roof. Dining with Mr. Martin at the hotel to-day, heard the lamentations of a stalwart digger over a certain canteen-mistress of New Rush, deceased yesterday. The woman's admirers carried the coffin, but unfortunately let it drop at the entrance (!) of the cemetery, and, for some cause, were unable to raise it. In the bar of the hotel there was much talk of poor Doll Tearsheet. Says one, "Miss —— died of drink, that's what she did!"

"Died of drink!" cried another—"died of drink! she died of a Christian fever, like the best of us. How many of us was there at her grave to-day? Ay, scores!—all the best men of the Colesberg Kopje. And they all respected her as a woman. Look ye here! I didn't know the poor thing alive, but I bore a hand with her coffin, and I'll knock any man down who says she died of drink!" By-the-bye, it may be well to state that the deceased woman had not more, at most, than a half-dozen rivals in her way of life, over all these wealthy and populous fields. The

Digitized by Google

diamond diggings, in my time, were the most virtuous camps ever heard of.

There is a very unsatisfactory state of things just now at New Rush. Besides the ancient grievance of Kaffir theft, there are one or two new ones agitating this nervous population. As regards the former matter, after much hesitation, I do not hesitate at length to state a deliberate opinion that it is imaginary. For some time back I had half thought so, but the doings of our Vigilance Committee have proved it. I have spoken to several who have taken part in the various excursions round the camp, who have intercepted large parties of Kaffirs returning, and searched them thoroughly. In only one instance has any diamond at all been discovered, and that was a half-carat stone, which the man stated to be a present from his master—an assertion not disproved. In fact, there never was any proof offered of systematic theft. It was mere empty suspicion, rising from the consciousness that the Kaffirs might steal if they chose. I have ventured once or twice to say so, but such a sudden storm arose it became prudent to hold one's peace. Colesberg Kopje is just mad upon this subject. But of late, a serious dispute has arisen with the proprietors of Vooruitzicht. About Christmas last, these gentlemen yielded to a sense of injury, not, perhaps, unnatural, in observing how their property is bought and sold by persons holding only a monthly tenure. Stand licenses, or shop sites, are charged there £2 or £3 per month, according as they have a frontage of 50 or 100 feet. The proprietors make no distinction in the license fee, but one position in the town is naturally more valuable than another. This being so, the monthly lessee of a good stand can obtain £500 to £1,000 for it, though he has no guarantee in law to offer for its possession beyond the month. Seeing such transactions every day, the proprietors of the ground became anxious to participate in the profit. They issued a notice that henceforth they would grant leases for their holdings, with the intention, no doubt, of thus gradually leading on to a resump-

Digitized by Google

tion of this mine of wealth. But never a lease was asked for. They then took the stringent measure of advertising that no more monthly licenses would be granted. The result of this was the formation of a league for mutual defence amongst the standholders. Each and all undertook to bear the legal expenses of each victim to landlords' tyranny. The proprietors replied with a threat of ejectment. So the matter stands at this moment, and "Standholders' Rights" are the war-cry at New Rush—though what concern the diggers have in this dispute, many would be puzzled to explain.

There are very few subjects upon which our population is unanimous. I can think only of three, which are simple axioms here. Firstly, all proprietors, or owners of diamond farms, ought to be put out of existence as speedily as possible, and their lands confiscated. Secondly, all the diamond dealers in the world have formed a league against this community, to run down prices, and ruin it. Thirdly, all the Government arrangements and regulations are as stupid and malignant as they can be, and all the Government officers incompetent to their duty. Your digger likes to open the subject he discusses with a broad and free generalisation. This foundation laid, not to be shaken by any storm or torrent of argument, he invites ocular demonstration of its fitness. Take the first proposition: all proprietors should be abolished. "Look," says the digger, "at what we have done for the farm. It was a barren waste, half of it *brack*, or salt earth. The owner couldn't sell the sheep he reared. Horses fetched £5 apiece. The land would scarcely grow corn. You might have bought as much as ever you pleased for one shilling an acre, or less. It's our work has made it what it is. We found out the diamonds, and we pay more, in digging-licenses, shop-stands, and the rest, each month, than all the land was worth five years ago. And the owner isn't content with this. Having proved his farm to be 'diamondiferous,' by our sweat and enterprise, he would keep to himself all the soil we haven't actually got in hand. He'd turn us

Digitized by Google

out of that if he could, but we should just like to see him try, eh, boys? Well, what we've got we'll keep, but no 'prospecting' is to be allowed, no digging beyond the public fields marked out by Government. They bring actions of trespass and ejectment, and fine us! And they will try to tax us for tent-stands, ten shillings a month, besides our digging license of ten and sixpence. Consign us all to another world, if we stand it! We'll dig where we please, and live where we please, and pay nothing more than the old Committee charged, and blame us all, why did we let the English Government abolish it? Look at this, and that, and the other we used to do, and let's do it again, boys!" So the orator invites you to observe a hundred simple aspects of his side of the question. The audience follows him with uproarious approval, and no man so bold as dare point out the opposing arguments. The upholders of proprietary rights are those who have rights and property of their own to lose, and such bear little influence in diggers' council. The case that might be put—but never is—before the discontented assembly, comes to this, in the mind of an unprejudiced spectator.

Doubtless these farms had little worth before the discovery of diamonds, and unquestionably the working diggers may claim all the credit for that discovery. But their plea, upon this basis, can hold good only against the original proprietors. Had these men kept in their own hands the soil so greatly raised in value, it might or might not have been an argument in equity against further exactions. To discuss the question is not worth while, for there is not, so far as I am aware, any diamond farm still in the possession of its former owner. Ignorant and half-civilised boers, they lost their heads entirely at sight of these eager crowds, and were actually anxious to sell and get away. The purchasers respectively of Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, Colesberg Kopje, Alexandersfontein, and other places less known, bought those properties with the knowledge that diamonds were found there. It is no one's business to ask what they paid. No doubt, as serious men, they

Digitized by Google

obtained them at the best price, but I do not stop to investigate reports as to the precise sum. That is a detail solely interesting the buyer and seller. The momentous point is, that the farms were purchased as diamond farms, not as sheep runs. What becomes, then, of the digger argument based upon his toil, and the rest of it? The theory of an agreement between the new proprietors and the diggers is scarcely more tenable. On the 15th of May, 1871,—a memorable date up here,—a conference was held in Dutoitspan, at which the license fee was fixed at 10*s.* 6*d.* a claim, and important details of self-government were established. But, if it be not granted that these terms were exacted by the diggers under actual fear and *duresse*, it is quite certain that the owners of Dutoitspan formally repudiated the concessions made when the Free State Parliament took advantage of them to demand, on its own account, 5*s.* 3*d.* of each half-guinea so paid. This arbitrary and unheard-of confiscation, which was actually carried out, certainly released the proprietors from their bargain. To restore what they thus lost, it must have been necessary to ask a guinea fee. They did not do so, however, nor has the license been increased anywhere, even though the proclamation of Sir H. Barkly allows it. The proprietors contented themselves with a repudiation of the rules of May 15th, so far as this matter was concerned. Then the English authority came in, and, as a thing of course, the self-government of the diggers was abolished. By the just and careful provisions of Sir H. Barkly's proclamation, all existing fields or workings were thrown open. Anxious to avoid any imitation of Free State injustice,—which was, perhaps, after all, less a wilful sin than one exacted by utter weakness,—the governor declared the actual diggings public to any one who could pay the license fee, though, as I interpret the proclamation, he put no limit upon the fee to be exacted. But, on the other hand, he recognised the right of proprietors,—upon such land as bore no reservation of minerals, in which category are included all farms held under title of the late Griqua government,—to refuse

Digitized by Google

the opening of fresh fields upon their estate. Included in this right, is, of course, that of refusing permission to prospect. It was early given the proprietors to understand that an addition to the actual rate of license upon the public fields would not be sanctioned by the Commissioners. In such a feeling originated that most injudicious and uncalled-for proclamation of Captain Rorke's, to which I have referred at page 101, wherein he stated that he would not officially collect any greater license fee than that prevailing. This proclamation was withdrawn promptly by the Commissioners in a notice so ingeniously explanatory that no human being could tell why it repressed the inspector's zeal; but this was a mere matter of form. The resolve of the Commissioners, and, I believe, of the Capetown government, is immutable. Charge what you like, they say in effect, for diggings yet to be opened or forbid them altogether; but we will have no dangerous meddling with established custom. There have been many rumours of a merciless increase in the license fee of Vooruitzicht. I believe that the Commissioners have refused to hold further correspondence with the proprietors of that farm upon the subject, referring them to Capetown. But I am not aware that any overt acts have been committed there, and I can guarantee that an attempt so dangerous was not entertained in serious thought by the London and South African Exploration Company until the confiscation of half their revenue was threatened.

But, at the same time, it is optional with the possessor of land unburdened with a reservation of minerals to invite digging, and, so soon as a hundred diggers are collected on the spot, to declare the area of claims marked out to be public ground. This course was followed by the provisional purchasers of Rietspan Farm, on which stood that latest New Rush I referred to some pages back. It is probable, I think, that if a new kopje should be found really worth working, other proprietors might ultimately pursue this course; but it is natural they should decline to be hurried in their decision. The case, however, has not yet arisen. Their option

Digitized by Google

would lie between this and the far more difficult course, as yet untried, of working the kopje on their own account, and for their own profit.

Another subject of discontent just now is the application of the canteen law of the colony to Griqualand. This exacts that every public-house, not specially exempted, shall close at nine P.M., a proper and reasonable law, but denounced by agitators as a new oppression.

I am assured, upon excellent authority, that Messrs. Maclean, Manby, and Malam, the alleged ringleaders in our riots of last month, will be very exactly put upon their trial at Klipdrift when the day comes round. It was not generally believed that further proceedings would be taken, and certainly anticipated by no one that all the sternest justice of the law would be exacted. It has been resolved, however, to prosecute to the bitter end, although Government is hard put to it for evidence. The witness Ascher, on whose positive testimony the prisoners were committed, has been himself obliged to seek the hospitality of Jacobsdaal, on a charge of receiving stolen goods. Though two thousand, or, it may be, four thousand men saw all the riot, none will bear evidence. Undismayed, the Crown Counsel hold their course. They are assured of efficient support. Our new police have been gradually arriving; a body of forty-eight reached here together on Saturday. These men belong to the same corps as our mutinous, incompetent guardians of the peace, but an important difference between them lies in this: the new-comers are volunteers for municipal duty, whilst the others were drafted here in defiance of their wish, or even of their engagement. On the other hand, the diggers breathe nought but fire and flames. They say, and doubtless believe, that several hundred pounds have been subscribed for hiring carts to Klipdrift on the eventful day, and nothing less than burning of the court-house is to be the penalty of conviction. Nevertheless, I do not anticipate much trouble. The subscriptions to the Defence Fund only amount to £1 5*s.*! Ominous for

Digitized by Google

the unfortunate accused.* Indeed, the fiery spirit of December last burns feebly. The fall in diamonds, and the uncertainty of prospects in general, have caused great depression; something like pauperism threatens us. It is no uncommon thing to be solicited by a beggar nowadays. A few incorrigible scamps and vagabonds we always had, but there is now another class abroad —men who are evidently ashamed to beg, yet cannot live by digging. I fear the palmy days of "pick and shovel" are gone past. A few more months of glutted markets and decreasing values will satisfy all prudent colonists that diamond digging should be left to those who have both capital and time to invest therein.

Meanwhile the camps increase in size, and slowly gather the rudiments of civilised existence; a church, as handsome as can well be built of wood and canvas, has been raised by the Dutch diggers at Dutoitspan. A wide new square surrounds it, and the applications for stands therein flow briskly. A school for girls, long talked of, has at length been opened, where, I know not; but he who passes up the main street about twelve or five perceives that it is well attended; a crowd of little maidens, armed with slate and book, pour homeward to their tents towards those hours, chattering gaily, in Dutch for the most part. The boers trek hither wives and families and all, never thinking probably what kind of education life on these rough fields will give their little ones; colonists of English blood rarely come up but all alone, sending for wife and children when assured of keeping them in decent company. Heaven knows this camp is not a place for modest women, and much less for half-grown girls and boys; however, since here they are, it is well they should have schooling, and the diamond fields will have effected not the least of their good results in teaching some proportion of the savage boer children to read

* The trial duly came on, and was adjourned, in the absence of evidence, at the end of March. There was great excitement, but no riot. The Government will be wisely counselled if it now drop the prosecution.

Digitized by Google

and write—accomplishments almost unknown, as I have every reason to believe, amongst the women of this district. Their fellow-countrymen say so, and their clergy, and their own newspapers. Certes, it is not the evidence of appearance or of manner which will shake their testimony. Such ugly women never were seen under a white skin, and as for figures—preserve me from the recollection in a fever fit! Straight up and down they are as any tree-trunk, tall almost as it, or else they overhang in all directions, one pendulous jelly of unwholesome flesh. Upon their heads is tossed the *kapje* (cappy), a hideous calico funnel, of which the coal-scuttle bonnet of our grandmothers was the refined and graceful model. Around their waists is hung a crinoline, home made, of monstrous girth in general. Not in the wildest time of that *dementia* in Europe did I see such recklessness in the article of hoops as is common here. It is the *latest fashion*, and still obtains, in this secluded land, an envious contempt from such poor farmers' wives as cannot yet obtain a ring or two of iron hoop. Ye gods, what hateful secrets of the nether limb have been disclosed to us in a whisk of that extravagant balloon! Pitch over it, any how, a dirty cotton dress, patched, torn, buttonless, and unsewn, stick *kapje* on top, and shove canoe-like shoes of untanned hide beneath the ragged edge—you have the costume of a wealthy boer's wife or daughter in West Griqualand or Free State. Enough of that awful recollection; shall I sketch the man? Measure off the superbest growth of masculine flesh, give it six feet at least in height, the shoulders of an Atlas, and the limbs of an Ares; a face with big but not unhandsome features, burned to a berry, stained and mottled with dirt; sun-dried hair, ignorant of comb, hanging like a mane, and mingling with a flaxen growth of beard. His corduroy clothes are rotting gradually from his great limbs; there is a patch of strongly contrasted stuff where the saddle has prematurely worn it through. In that suit he lives and sleeps, taking it off only when crossing a river, or when repairs may be no more delayed. Ugh! There is an

Digitized by Google

odour of unwashedness about the man, about his house, that follows him a yard behind. Let us drop the dirty subject.*

The cost of living here gradually lowers. Meat was always cheap to a fable; but I have seen a cabbage sell for 10*s.*, a water-melon for 15*s.*, onions and figs separately at 1*s.* apiece. Other vegetables in proportion. But this was three months since. Such prices stirred the sluggish nature of the rustic to its greediest depth. On every side potatoes have been planted, and peas and beans, and all description of green things. The markets are crowded nearly every day with waggons, coming even from the far Transvaal Republic. Country meal sold at Detroitspan on the market square last week at 35*s.* per bag of 100 lbs. Indian-corn meal at the same price; and unground at 16*s.* Kaffir corn fetched only 14*s.* Fire-wood was £2 the waggon load. Forage for horses 9*d.* per bundle, of the weight of 5 lbs. Onions were 21*s.* the measure of 210 lbs. Butter, 1*s.* 3*d.* per lb.; bacon, 1*s.*; ham, 1*s.* 9*d.*; country tobacco, 9*d.*; sun-dried meat, 4*d.* Eggs fetched 2*s.* 6*d.* a dozen. Milk, 9*d.* the bottle, common wine measure. Oxen, for slaughter, were £7 each; and sheep, 10*s.* to 12*s.* These figures are reasonable enough, and they represent average prices at the present time. Sometimes produce rules lower, and, when the rivers are impassable, things work up to a fabulous value, for the interior trade is stopped. But it is a common complaint with farmers that they cannot calculate the markets from one day to another. Sometimes the waggons will arrive in a crowd, and then their loads are sold for what they'll fetch. Sometimes again, the market will be actually bare for

* The reader will bear in mind I speak only of what class of man has come beneath my observation, the boer farmers of this out-of-the-way district. Every one assures me that in the Colony, with no greater wealth, you find a very different condition of things among the Dutch. Gentlemen coming hither from the South are as much disgusted as are we English. The settlers who moved up here were of the lower order, and residence in a country so removed from civilisation, could not be expected to improve their habits of life.

Digitized by Google

several days consecutively. There is not any certainty at all, for not a storehouse or granary is found in all the camps. About ten days ago, forage was with difficulty bought at half-a-crown the bundle, but, the very day after touching this price, it fell to 9*d*., and in twenty-four hours more, there was a plethora at 6*d*. Even this rate pays the Albanian farmers handsomely. Gardens are now being laid out wherever water can be had in quantities sufficient, and, in twelve months from this, vegetables should be as cheap as in the most favoured districts of the colony. Whether the diamond fields will then demand the loads of food it now requires is a question to be asked.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXV.

THE VELDT.

Another journey to Hopetown—Springbok—Meercats—Two species common—A third by the Hook—Their habits and appearance—My tame meercat "Diamond"—His voice and manners—A little fury—Thoughts about the veldt—Our English scenery how different—The veldt has its own charm—The glory of grey magnitude—How the veldt appears to one born thereupon—A flight of locusts—Free State law—I bid good-bye to the fields—The question of further annexations.

MARCH 1st.—Though very unwell, a letter from Mr. Webb, announcing him to be in really a dangerous condition, took Mr. Fry and myself along the old familiar road to Belmont. This journey is only to be mentioned for the sake of an observation that occurred to me. Of incident there is not often much. A few hundred springboks we saw; fired at one or two which ventured within that circle of safety beyond which the black streak on their side cannot be distinguished. Springbok themselves sight their enemy's rifle. It is believed that the streak is invisible beyond three hundred yards, and boers never waste a shot unless it be clearly marked. We found a sick meercat by the roadside, the prettiest, but most ferocious little brute I ever saw. Of these animals there are several kinds, only to be classed together by their habit of living in holes upon the veldt, and standing on hind legs to survey the prospect, in a very droll manner. One sort is nothing less than a squirrel, only differing from our English species in its practice of staying on the ground—perhaps for want of trees. The others exactly resemble this little creature in colour, and one kind has a brush like the squirrel; they are all

Digitized by Google

weasels, however, as I believe. Two of them, at least, have taper tails, which they do not carry so upright in running. There is another variety, of great prettiness, chestnut brown in colour, which I only saw beyond the Vaal. These creatures all seem to live in a neighbourly manner, though whether the squirrels really make friendship with the weasels, I greatly doubt. They dwell in multitudes about the veldt, inhabiting large holes, so deep that to dig them out is a hopeless effort. Their burrows are found in groups of ten or a dozen together, making it impossible to cut off corners through the open, in driving, even where no sloots intervene. Meercats are not very wild. They scamper off from an approaching waggon only a few yards beyond the noses of the team. With tails straight up in air, the little fellows gallop towards their holes, and at the brink drop down upon their haunches, and observe the danger with averted heads. It is a funny and a very pretty sight to mark the little group, all squatted like kangaroos, with fore arms pendent, and their dainty muzzles pointing immovably towards an opposite quarter of the compass. One might think they were unconcerned, but, looking more closely, you will see that every proceeding is watched askance with the brightest eyes possible. The young are easily caught, though precociously active. Headed away from the burrow, they lose their presence of mind, and fall victims to the pursuer, whilst the parent "chuck-chucks" like a hen, and dances alternately on four legs and on two.

The squirrels are very easily domesticated. The weasels, scientifically the *Suricata Zenick*, may be brought to that negative degree of tameness in which an animal will not bite unless irritated or alarmed or hungry. I have one on my foot at this moment of writing, caught when scarcely bigger than one's fist, which has reached this point, and does not seem likely to get beyond it. He knows his name, and will look up when called; but—as yet, at least—has no idea of approaching. He does not bite if taken up, but trots briskly away at the first demon-

Digitized by Google

stration. When captured he "chucks" angrily, having, indeed, the widest range of notes I ever heard in an animal. His cries of anger, of alarm, of contentment, we have easily made out. The first is a shrill worry; the second, a pitiful call, or, if much frightened, a clear bark, like the tiniest of tiny dog-voices; the third is a low cluck. But he has, besides, a number of intonations, uttered without visible cause, but manifestly significant of his feelings. Thus, trotting about the room, he will suddenly change his low, incessant chuckle to a pretty coo, full of delight. I think there never could be such a dainty and amusing pet as Diamond. His fur is long and grey, a little coarse, but softening to velvet on the head. His nose is tapered to the finest point, and such bright, black, saucy eyes could not be matched in the world. He has eyelashes so long, so black, and so thick they almost shade the sparkling beads beneath. His ears are flat to the head, shaped like a monkey's or a man's, but looking, on his soft, grey fur, as if cut out in sable velvet. In size of body he might be about as large as a very big rat, but his long coat gives him quite respectable dimensions. I do not yet know whether he has ceased growing. Diamond trots about with a curious jerky motion, wonderfully quick when occasion calls, but rather quaint and shambling in general. But when a gleam of sun shines out, and he hurries to enjoy it with redoubled chuckling, then is the moment to see my meercat. Stopping in the very centre of the glow, he gathers his tail well under him, and gravely squats upon his haunches. In this attitude he will sit in silence for a great length of time, turning his clever little head towards the faintest sound, watching all his surroundings at once. He will turn right round sometimes without dropping the forepaws. Thus seated, the gravest cannot restrain themselves from laughter at my pet. But I fear it will be an impossible attempt to keep poor little Diamond through an English winter. He is *frilleux* to an extraordinary degree.

Whether the meercat we caught on the day of which I write was

Digitized by Google

of the same species as mine, I do not know. They resembled each other in most points, but I am inclined to think them different. Any way, no lynx or wild-cat could be so ferocious. The little creature sprang at us with bounds quite incredible, two feet from the ground, the moment we approached. Its eyes blazed, it screamed like a child with rage. Throwing a pith hat over it, the furious animal fixed its teeth therein, so fast that it could not withdraw them, and hung suspended when we took it up. There chanced to be a dog with us, a large bull-terrier. Whistling it up, the meercat no sooner caught a glimpse of its hide above the grass than he bounded forward, and sprang upon the terrier's flank before he knew what was the matter. The fright and rage of the dog were alarming. He rolled over and over, snarling, barking, and screaming. But the meercat held on with death-like grip of teeth and claws, until we ran up to drive him off. Admiring the courage of so small a thing, we enticed him, in bounds and paroxysms of rage upon us, from the public path, and left him to recover if it might be. The hatred and fury of veldt animals against a dog is well known. Mr. Wayland told me of a gentleman who owned two meercats, of what species he could not say, which had killed many dogs of every size. They would rush out a hundred yards to attack passing curs. And none so large or savage as to be a match for these ferocious little cats. Even my Diamond, I notice, young as he is, watches a dog with angry eye and chuckle. Yesterday, they tell me, being on the lawn, he made a demonstration against a big retriever, which necessitated the instant removal of that victim.

After a certain experience of South Africa, and much travel about the veldt, one begins to comprehend how a man *might* come to admire these endless plains, this dry and colourless survey. I never heard any one yet describe the beauty of such scenery. Perhaps none ever felt it. English-born proclaim the veldt an abomination of ugliness beyond characterization, and colonials accept it as the natural appearance of the earth's surface, about

Digitized by Google

which no useful remarks can be offered. But I faintly begin to see that the veldt is not without its strange and unusual charm, under certain circumstances of light and season. Perhaps we Englishmen are too apt to think our green "the only wear" for all the earth around. Brought up amidst an eternal verdure, and loving to mark its ever-varying tint, we do not see how little is our prettiest landscape, and how monotonous is evergreen. Our grass is emerald, the leafy shadows come and go across it; the tall trees rustle, linnets sing and flitter. A weedy brook purls through the meadow. Wooded hills rise softly. Overhead is a changing sky, blue, but filled with rain-clouds long and fleecy. Such a scenery, in which our childhood passed, is the ideal of maturer life. How does the traveller rejoice when, in some nook or valley, he perceives a fleeting likeness of the prospect inly cherished! how returning does he hail it with the joy of youth renewed! But our English landscape, though, indeed, it has a charm for all, is not the ideal of any but the Englishman. A mountaineer feels cramped, a dweller on the breezy plain decries our tiny fields, a southron shivers at the sight of our high-mantling clouds and oozy meadows. To every man, that which is furthest from his early memories will be furthest from his admiration. A sudden contrast, as of mountains or of ocean, may compel delight for one brief period, but only on condition that the loved home scenery be his to enjoy for tranquil years to come.

It may be given him, however, sometimes to see with alien eyes; dimly to comprehend what charms a class of landscape widely differing from his own ideal might bear to those whose earliest recollection is of such. When first surveying the dry, dun veldt, I never thought the time would come when, even for a moment, I should see a beauty, though a strange one, in its aspect. But familiar use may reconcile even this novelty to an old traveller. Few of those born in the South African desert have concerned themselves in the matter of scenery. The veldt is to them a sheep-walk, capable of bearing a fleece per *morgen*, more

Digitized by Google

or less. But I apprehend that if these farmers were transported to our English scene they would vaguely pine for their familiar prospect. In some such words as these would such an one describe the fond ideal of his eye.

A long, low, rolling plain, without a landmark; grey-green underfoot; stretching in bands and zones of sun and shade to the faint purple hills which gird its distant sky-line. Acres of golden blossom breaking the long perspective. Shadows of mighty clouds darkening the sunlit grass, and passing by. A globe of fire above. A chain of lakes, the fell mirage, along the far horizon, bearing the image of the hills on their deceitful bosom. Miles and miles of scanty grass bending beneath a sultry breeze. A whirlwind dancing, curtseying, and bounding forward, far ahead. The herds of God scattered all around, their dappled sides glancing as they start away. No trees, no water, no green thing. Time-hoary above all mountains are those purple boundaries of the scene, but their grim fissures have no verdure save the clustering stonecrop. This is the eldest born of continents, and its hills are wrecks of the primeval world. Worn down, grinded, and scarred are they, with the winter's storm and summer heat of a countless period. All are levelled to one uniform height; their tops are flat as lines of Titanic masonry. No peaks nor summits there! On a lofty level they skirt the sky. A *lost kop* here and there stands out alone, its crown shaved off to match the line. At foot thereof the grass grows rank, and a gnarled copse of camel-thorn takes root. Down its parched sides the rain-flow pours in cataracts, wearing deep sloots amongst the crop of pebbles. Everywhere is the trace of water, hurrying madly to the sea, but nowhere does it lie. What in this sterile scenery shall one admire? The breadth of it, I think, the freedom, the airiness, the purple passing shadows, the zones of colour, the perspective of its sky and fading distance. For them the boer would pine in verdant England.

Crossed at the junction of the Riet and Modder. Stuck in the

Digitized by Google

ford;—Mr. Fry and I had to strip and lift out the cart. Between this point and Belmont, we met twelve carts and five waggons, bearing passengers to the fields by this out-of-the-way route. The number, I think, was not unusual, but I happened to count that day; of goods' waggons the quantity was enormous.

Returning on the 3rd, passed through a flight of locusts, just as they were alighting, towards sundown. Many descriptions have I read of this extraordinary sight, but none that did it justice. The fact is, words could not portray the marvel. If I said the insects flew like flakes of snow borne on a wind, I should not give the reader much to work his fancy on. If I told him that the grass and bushes bristled as hid beneath a solid mound of locusts, he could not realise the sight before us. They were first beheld as a long, thin wreath of smoke above the hills. Then other wreaths grew visible, mingling their currents with the first, until at length the horizon was obscured as by a dust storm. As yet they flew miles beyond us. As we drove on, approaching always, there was no cessation of their flight. From the far side they still mounted up, and swept along, past the setting sun, till lost to view. Two hours, probably, they defiled before we reached them, and perhaps but half the swarm had yet come into sight when sundown warned them to take rest and food. High circling above the storm of wings, a thousand birds pursued. Each instant they swooped down amongst the moving mass, and soared again. Then we began to near the scene. Outflyers whizzed swiftly past upon the wind, high up above our heads. Laggards were crushed beneath our wheels. The bushes held one or two—held half-a-dozen—a score—a thousand—a countless host. The outflyers thickened—thickened—till the air grew dark with them, and we could see not five yards from the track. They blew in our faces, and clung tight to hair and clothes. They buzzed above the swarming thorns, till beaten down by each other's wings. Before Scholtz's garden, by the roadside, they alighted in such myriads of myriads, they hid it from us as with a curtain of

Digitized by Google

driving snow. The air quivered with them; the earth was grey and bristling; the bushes seemed to move; their flight sang like the whirl of machinery.

Every animal and every bird upon their route was all astir. The meercats scarcely noticed us; the marmots picked their prey beneath our horses' feet. At Scholtz's dam, the horses and oxen were devouring locusts with avidity, abandoning their forage. From the leopards to the field-mice, every beast came hurrying to the banquet. The springbok will be trotting here before daylight to-morrow, and many a bag of roasted locusts have the Kaffirs already gathered. Lions grow fat and lazy pursuing the swarm, and the timidest of antelopes has no fear of them when engaged in the common chase. But no efforts of man or beast can keep this plague under. In lonely parts of the Free State, or in the Kalihari desert, an endless brood is hatched, which sweeps before the wind, after three years of larva, to descend on the colonial harvests. There is no hope of riddance till the waste lands be all inhabited.

4th.—Very ill and drowsy. A friend came in from New Rush to see me, jubilant over the successful recovery of two Kaffirs who had left him. My good friend, though an ardent loyalist, is no approver of the annexation. He would have much preferred to dig his diamonds under Free State no-law, retiring to spend the plunder beneath the shades of English order. Most diggers have this feeling. They are passionately attached to the old home—I speak of the colonial-born—and proud of England to a point that makes us English-born ashamed; but they don't wish the rights of man introduced upon the diggings, and in so far they detest the annexation. The visitor, with a mournful satisfaction, told me how easily he had recovered the runaways on Free State ground. They safely crossed the frontier yesterday, and stood beyond English jurisdiction when he rode up to them. Armed with a revolver, he drove them before him to the nearest farm, where he was directed to the veldt-cornet's residence. This

Digitized by Google

official, who answers somewhat to our J.P., and somewhat to our parish constable, received from my friend an affidavit that the Kaffirs were engaged to him for a term unexpired, and, without more formalities, had the pair tied up, and twenty-five lashes laid across their backs. This done, they were fastened on either side their master's saddle, and so trotted home again. As R. observed to me, "How differently would things have been managed by an English official!" I replied, "Quite so! *He* would have asked proof that these poor Zulus, who can speak no Dutch, belong to you—would have asked why they ran away—would have satisfied himself that they alone deserved the lashes." My friend did not see this. He knew that right and justice were upon his side, and that the service these ungrateful fellows had left was proverbial in camp for its humanity; he would not admit that others who ill-treated their servants could just as readily have obtained the assistance of the veldt-cornet, and administered ten times the punishment, had they been willing to pay the fees.

On the 7th, very weak, and vomiting blood, I left the fields for good, calling at Belmont to bid Mr. Webb and my kind friends good-bye. From thence to Mr. Arnot's, where I passed the night, sleeping on the floor of the drawing-room, so full was this hospitable dwelling. Mr. Arnot feels satisfied that England will find further annexations necessary; Monkoran and the Batlapins, whose interests he also represents, offered their lands and their allegiance years ago, and the danger of war between these tribes and the South African Republic will oblige the Assembly to accept the offer. I quite agree with Mr. Arnot as to the ultimate necessity; England must advance in these parts, now that Griqualand is hers. The Orange was a boundary such as is needed when the neighbouring State maintains a hostile attitude perpetually, and will give no extradition of criminals; but we have now an imaginary line, curving in and out, over which an increasing commerce flows. We have neighbours dangerous in themselves, and more dangerous for their mutual enmity. When the next Kaffir war breaks out

Digitized by Google

upon the Hart River—no long date to expect—England or Cape Colony must intervene; but not eagerly will one or other of them move to annex so vast a space, complicated in its relations by the claim of the South African Republic, and by no means united in its own Government. Monkoran had not proved at this time—though Mr. Arnot held the proofs in hand—that he possessed the right of handing over his territory. In point of fact, it is alleged that he is not the paramount chief, in the same manner as Waterboer is denied to be supreme over the Koks. Even when this is settled, as it soon must be, the Governor may not move. He has plenty upon his hands, and not till the danger presses will he think of widening his boundaries, an act which would double existing complications. Soon enough that time will come. There is nothing more certain than the amalgamation of the two republics, with the Kaffir states that border them, within the limits of a confederate dominion under English supremacy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

I start on the homeward journey—Sample of the contract service—Capsize of the up-waggon—Addison's farm—Kriepiet—Kalkekraal—Harnessing wild mules in the dark—Accidents and offences—Bring to for the night—Marmots and meercats—Schinderspan—Victoria again—Mr. Jackson's farm—The baby—It becomes necessary to bark at night—Devinish's farm—Beaufort—Fine trees—Large trade—The Gouff desert—Bombarding a farmhouse—The Hex River kloof—Narrow escapes—A wine farm—Bain's kloof—Capetown—Home.

AT the beginning of this book I told the story of a passage up to the fields, but it may not be superfluous to sketch the downward journey. I would fain have returned by the Eastern Province, and have thus beheld the wonders of King William's-town and Port Elizabeth. The sight of them, it is not doubtful, would have given me more pleasing memories of South Africa. The life of the colony lies in its eastward coast, and the beauty also. I should have seen most creditable farming there, and industries and natural wealth that will redeem the barren west. But I have again and again called to the reader's mind the fact that all such strictures and such unlovely sketches as I drew are to be treated as local only—local indeed to a monstrous region, but *not* true of all the colony; at least, I believe not. However, circumstances over which I had no control ordered me to retrace the route by which I sought the fields, a necessity I regretted.

At ten A.M. on the morning of the 9th of March, I arrived in Hopetown, driving from Mr. Arnot's house of Eskdale. The Inland Transport Company's waggon had come in overnight, but

Digitized by Google

was delayed for four-and-twenty hours by the want of harness. Vastly have the arrangements of the Company improved since that miserable journey upwards. It has by this time reached the knowledge of Capetown that Pniel is *not* the centre of the diamond fields: would Government could be tempted to discover that Klipdrift is yet further from that point. The waggons do not now convey an irritated traveller by a circumbendibus of a hundred miles, to show him the scenery. They go, or most of them do, from Hopetown direct. In many other respects have things changed for the better, but this delay in Hopetown shows that improvement is still possible. It appeared on inquiry that the sub-contractor who works this first stage had been begging new harness for six months past. Having at length, by importunity, obtained a set, he prudently "hangs on" to it. When his mules come in, their furniture is whipped off smart and locked in a stable. In chuckling triumph our sub-contractor parades the town, his key in his breeches' pocket. This act of sagacious selfishness exhausts the resources of the transport company. Its officials sit and growl, and lounge, and smoke, until the up-waggon arrives to relieve their distress. Thus were we detained nearly twenty-four hours in Hopetown, and I regretted my hasty departure from Eskdale.

In the evening, towards eleven o'clock, the up-waggon arrived, that is to say, the passengers came in on foot. A little accident, which took the form of a capsize, had brought the vehicle to a full stop some mile and a half away. The harness we had been awaiting was reported to be broken all to pieces. There was nothing for it but to go to bed, since the Transport people could not undertake to lift their waggon until daylight. I don't know what was ultimately found to be the damage, but our harness proved mendable, and we got away about seven A.M. on Sunday the 10th. First stage, Addison's farm, reached at 11.30 A.M. Mr. Addison is an Englishman, to whose ingenuity and enterprise I have already done justice in describing the upward journey.

Digitized by Google

Besides attempting to farm upon recognised principles, he has even tried, in some simple fashion, to adorn the approaches to his house, and great is the scorn, I do not question, that neighbours feel for him on that account. Here we breakfasted and changed mules, parting with an excellent team for one quite as excellent. Kriepiet, a merely barbarous boer cottage, with never a bit of civilisation about it, was the next stage, 3.30 P.M.; nothing to eat here. Changed mules and on to Kalkekraal, which was the ditto of Kriepiet, 6.30 P.M.; nothing but coffee to be had. Here we enjoyed some weary excitement, if one might so speak. It was pitch dark, and the weather threatening, before the fresh team could be brought up to harness. As people hereabouts are resolute not to use a lantern under any possible circumstances, it is to be expected that to inspan ten mules will take some time and demand some patience, when one can't see one's hand before one, and the rain is falling as from a sluice. An hour and a half we employed in fixing our team; every two or three minutes a brute would break away into the void, and a chase ensued. He always came back to the crowd, however, after a half-mile circuit; but when eight cattle were inspanned, the two leaders made up their minds for good and all, and bolted, and were seen no more. Meanwhile, being but three gentlemen and one lady with a child in the waggon, we had turned down the seats and wooed the Morpheus of the diamond fields; if there be any god who grants a sounder sleep, I am not jealous of those who enjoy it. At ten o'clock P.M., it then raining cats and dogs, we got under weigh. The nights begin to grow cold, but even a Moscow frost could not have pierced our jackal-skin karosses. Drowsily we feel the bumps and lurches of the waggon. In five minutes, thanks to a painful experience, nothing short of a capsize or a full stop could rouse us; but the latter incident came shortly to disturb our rest, heralded and chorused by a merry catch of oaths in Dutch vernacular. The single horse amongst our team of mules has rounded off his mad career by lying down. Drowsily we master the situa-

Digitized by Google

tion, and know no more, until the bumps, and rolls, and lurches, the pistol-crack of our driver's whip, and the flying volley of objurgation, tell us the horse is raised and we proceeding. Interval of some hours; awoke by the crushing of heavy bodies upon me—I lie on the starboard side,—I clutch a human being madly by the neck, and become aware that we are within one degree of a turn over. It is then borne to us by the blasphemy of our driver, guard, and "leader," that the horse, after playing numerous fantastic tricks before high heaven, has lain down again. We meanwhile hang suspended, and a push would send us toppling. It is still pitch dark, and still pouring cats and dogs. What an agitation would be reigning now aboard were this the "up" waggon! How the lady would scream and the baby bellow, and the men scramble out in trembling eagerness! We do nothing of the sort; the lady remarks that it "seems to be rough," and the child sleeps happily on her bosom. The male passengers only grunt a word or two, and roll themselves tighter in their furs. The situation is awkward, no doubt, *mais nous en avons vu bien d'autres!* But the harness is found to be tangled inextricably, and, in the critical position of the waggon, they do not dare to stir the horse; so, in the darkness, we outspan, and wait for daylight.

It came at length, Monday, the 11th, as raw a morning as in English November. At 5 A.M. we got the mess straightened out, harnessed up, and travelled. At 5.15 A.M. that evil horse lay down again, plunged up, and got across his neighbour's back. Then he jibbed, and bucked, and kicked a leg over either trace. When the brisk sun uprose, we lighted, fully expecting to outwalk the hilarious team. The marmots, and meercats, and ground-squirrels were all scurrying about the veldt, and many a jolly chase had we in that bright morning time. The marmots turned and doubled like fat rats, but several we could have caught had they been worth it. The merry little meercats stood on their hind legs to watch the fun, their bright eyes twinkling askance. And then,

Digitized by Google

when we turned sharply on the pretty creatures, how the whole troop of half-a-score or more dropped flat upon the ground, and scampered off with their long tails straight upright mockingly! But, in the meantime, they had unharnessed the evil horse and his comrade, turning them loose. And the six mules—all that remained of ten—trotted cheerfully away with the lightened waggon. So we climbed in again, and reached Schinderspan at 9.15 A.M., twelve hours late. Here we changed again, and got some breakfast. There is a small store at this place, and the shopman introduced us to a big, gaunt, dirty boer, who had come to purchase various articles. He had, at this time, been twelve hours about the place, and had not yet made up his mighty mind to any one investment. The day grew hotter and hotter, much more so than was pleasant, but cool almost compared with the raging heat of my up journey in November. At 1.15 P.M. we had bumped and rolled as far as Jackscaren, and changed mules. Kuerfontein, 4.30 P.M. Here was a noble tree, and a comfortable boer's house, but nothing to eat, and only coffee made of roasted corn to drink. The farmer had no fowls, fed his calves with the cow's milk, and did not make butter. Wonderfontein, 7.15 P.M. Just before reaching this place, we crossed two rivers, and dreary anticipations of delay were drawn from their appearance; for it was necessary to ford them again before reaching Victoria, and we feared they were rising. Nearly capsized upon the bank; only the wonderful driving of our Hottentot saved us. At Wonderfontein, as I am pleased to declare, the boer woman in charge was very kind and polite. She had nothing to give us except coffee, but it was poured out with courteous words. All the party was living on a raw ham of mine, and ancient loaves we bought at Hopetown. There were also some small matters in the form of apples and pomegranates to stay the appetite. After leaving this place, with fresh mules, we staggered and jolted along in unconsciousness till morning. Eight A.M. on the 12th saw us in Victoria.

This is a pretty village, and clean looking, as are all settlements

Digitized by Google

in this dry climate. The streets are lined with trees—willows, with a gum-tree occasionally. The houses built of brick, white-washed or stuccoed, and one or two of them boast a second storey. The population may be near a thousand. There is no sign of poverty anywhere. The negro camp stands outside the town, and white paupers were unknown before the discovery of diamonds. Heaven grant this country be not about to pay too dear its long impunity! After breakfast at the little inn, we started again at 9.30 A.M., carrying a fifth passenger. With eight handsome horses we covered the distance to Jasfontein in two hours. Thence, with nothing to eat, and a shocking team of cripples, we travelled to Jackson's Farm, reaching it at 5 P.M. Here was afforded us the opportunity of supper, but, hardened as one's palate grows in a land where cooking is an art unknown, there is a point of evil flavour, not easily reached, which mocks the patience of long suffering. We paid two shillings a head for kind intentions, and set forth again, without changing mules, at 6.30 P.M. But I should not omit to mention that, though Mr. Jackson's kitchen may fail, his garden science is excellent. Four magnificent mulberry-trees shadow his house front, and noble elms and gums line all the water-courses. There is a spring here, and that accounts for the welcome green. My readers will not have failed to notice that I dwell somewhat on the matter of trees. So the traveller in Egypt is found to lay some stress upon the pyramids. So the visitor to England might mention the fact with interest if he met a pterodactyl from time to time. At 7.40 P.M. we changed horses at a shed, and turned in. But the presence of a fifth traveller much disturbed our comfortable arrangements. The back seat of the waggon was given up to our lady passenger and her baby. By the way, never was there such a good child as that. It screamed not, and seldom moaned. I invoked hourly blessings on its head, until the digging gentleman behind me, whom we called Jones,—because he was a Dane, perhaps, for it wasn't his name or a bit like it; anyhow, I know no better reason,—until this

Digitized by Google

gentleman, I say, being asked to draw a cork for the female parent, innocently let fall that he had drawn four others with less trouble. I glanced at the bottle. It was labelled "Soothing Syrup," and henceforth my blessings fell upon the venerable head of Mrs. Winslow.

But our fifth passenger was decidedly in the way. The breadth of the waggon allowed only three to sleep side by side, and they must needs be douce men, untroubled by dreams. To lie across was simply tempting Providence, for a broken neck is the least that can befall you in the probable case of an overturn. So, from henceforward, it was necessary that one of us should sit up all night, or, as it is called in this country, "bark." The origin of the term is a little story: Two sailors, lost in the veldt up country, heard the lions roar all round them, and were greatly frightened. They had no means to light a fire, and they could not boast a dog. So, turn and turn about, the one of them slept, and the other circled round him, barking as like a mastiff as he knew how. Hence the expression. Our new comer volunteered to bark first night, and he rolled and tumbled on the driver's seat, now falling backwards on our prostrate bodies, now crushing his nose upon the splashboard. About 3 A.M. on the morning of the 14th, we reached Devinish's Farm at Salt River, where, not long since, some friends of mine found it needful to catch and harness their own span of mules, whilst the contractor stood in his doorway, with a rifle, threatening murder and sudden death. With fifty fine animals running loose before his door, the churlish fellow actually would have detained the waggon twelve hours, because he believed himself to have some grievance against the Directors in Capetown. At 4 A.M. we set off again, with a good team of horses, which played such pranks amongst the stones and mud-holes we thought the last hour of that waggon had arrived. Full gallop through the pitchy darkness we dashed along, up on this side, now on the other, now flying into the air, and now pitched downwards into a sloot; and so got to Rhenoster Kop at 7 A.M. The

Digitized by Google

hills begin to tower more lofty. They encircle us on every side, range beyond range. They take blue tones of grey, with azure shadows, and show like pyramids of pallid smoke in the farthest distance. About this place the houses begin to improve; there is more water, though scarcely yet a greater show than in the Arabian desert; the farm people speak a little English. At Rhenoster Kop is something almost like a little wood, but not a tree of more than ten feet high. Changing horses, we pushed on to Beaufort, and reached the inn there at 11.45 A.M. This is another village such as Victoria and Hopetown. There are gums and monstrous pear-trees in the streets. Before one door I saw the most magnificent oleanders, in the fullest bloom, that ever grew, as I should think. Then there are vines, forming a shelter to the stoops. Wool is the medium of trade, of course. Every transaction in the colony turns upon wool or diamonds. Though these up-country villages are such scanty settlements, they have a store or two in each of them large enough and rich enough for a capital. Put aside plate glass, mahogany, with ornamental young persons of either sex, and, in the matter of space and general readiness to do anything, these rough, brisk shops of South Africa would compare with our great London houses. It is strange to find such capital invested, and invested to enormous profit, in these oases; but it is a feature of an extraordinary country, and intelligible enough on reflection.

Beaufort we left at 1.45 P.M. after breakfast. Magnificent team of eight horses they gave us! We crossed the mountains, through a narrow kloof, as if on a high road, so far as speed goes. They looked like gigantic fortifications, with their long flattened tops, all of one height, against the sky. Red-grey are their sandstone sides, seamed with misty shadows. Here and there columns stand out alone, rounded and windworn. The pass is covered with loose pebbles, as for a giant's gravel walk. Steynskraal, 4.15 P.M., changed horses. Koodoo's Kop, 8 P.M. Here we found about a dozen waggons camping. Fires blazed all about, and

Digitized by Google

there was cooking at each of them. All these, and fifty more we had passed, were on their way to the diamond fields. It is a national movement, the exodus of a people. What all these hundreds can do up there but starve, I dare not think. Uitkyk 10 P.M., and two hours quiet sleep in the waggon, even for the "barker" of the night. Travelling again at midnight with fresh mules. We stopped half-an-hour at Kruidfontein, on the borders of the Gouff desert. It is so called because there is no grass, and even less water than usual. But the vegetation compares very favourably with the fertile parts (!). It consists of heaths in endless variety, chamomile, soap-plant, *cereus*, aloes, and a multitude of bulbous flowers. Though a desert, sheep flourish here excellently well in most seasons, but neither cattle nor horses. Waggonmaker's kraal, at the foot of a precipitous mountain, 8 A.M. A tolerable willow-tree finds the opportunity to grow in a damp spot before the door. Thence, changing mules, to Bloedriver, 10 A.M., through Waggonmaker's kloof. The road is stony, grey and white, passing beneath the foot of hills as naked as Egyptian mountains. At Bloedriver we breakfasted, and examined, with an interest vastly changed, that map of the diamond district which had so enthralled us going up, four months ago. *En route* again, 11.45 A.M. Grootfontein, 3.15 P.M. Here we found the worthy farmer in a monstrous agitation. The passengers by a late waggon, belonging to the Ceres Transport Company, had stoned his house, because the poor fellow would not get up to give them coffee at midnight. It was hard on him, seeing there is no agreement that he should give the passengers anything but fresh cattle. He stood behind the door, with his old gun loaded, only hoping, as he says, that some one would break in. However, I could not see that any damage in particular had been effected, for the dents upon his plank door were rather ornaments than otherwise. But the boer complains that his property has fallen 30 per cent. in value, and his numerous womankind—who all appeared to sleep in one room with him, by

Digitized by Google

the way—refuse to dwell longer in such a dangerous situation. Looking at them, I thought he might have entered that item on the profit side the ledger, but he didn't seem to be of that opinion. Buffel's River, 9 P.M. Here a supper was prepared, but we had eaten of my raw ham, and could no more. Our Danish friend, Jones, "barked," and we treked to Constable, reaching it at 8 A.M. on the 15th. Here the sun-bleached mountains of sandstone widen out, enclosing an amphitheatre of heathery plain. An hour after, having breakfasted, we left, with a team of ten beautiful black mules. The mountain ranges presently broke up into ponderous confusion, rearing their heads one behind another like waves in a broken sea. Those nearest were olive in tone, beyond them dun, and the furthest misty blue. Draag, 12 o'clock, at the entrance of the Hex River kloof. Our pretty mules were not so good to go as to look at, and we had to outspan two of them at the mouth of the pass. The road is a very creditable piece of engineering. It winds along the side of slopes and precipices that give one uncomfortable feelings to look down. We had a narrow escape of measuring their depth, for the two outspanned mules, running loose in front, kicked at our leaders in a very critical moment. We were within an ace of going over the side, for there is no parapet, of course. At 6 P.M. supper at Mayling's wine farm, a handsome house with noble oaks before it. Here we were shown the vineyards and the wine-press, and the monstrous vats, and all the rest of it. On the road again at 7 P.M., with a very good team of eight horses. Through the kloof at the other end the valley, over just such a road as the former, in pitch darkness, at a sharp trot. Our guard kept blowing manfully at his horn, but, for all that, we ran into an ox-waggon, whereof the driver was asleep. Now this really was a sensation to disturb the equanimity of even a digger. Sheer below us, faintly visible as a silver line, flowed the Hex River, and not a foot from our plunging horses loomed the waggon. We scrambled out as smart as any young beginners

Digitized by Google

could, jammed the waggon against the hillside, outspanned the oxen, and crushed past, our wheels actually grating. Then on to pretty Worcester, where we went to bed—for the first time since leaving Hopetown—at 10 P.M. At 7 A.M., on the 16th, we were roused again, to thread the magnificent mountain pass of Bain's Kloof. After breakfasting at Darling Bridge, we made Wellington at 3.30 in the afternoon, and caught the three o'clock train for Capetown. We had thus seen a bed once in six days, and enjoyed eleven meals in all during the journey. May this unvarnished tale warn future travellers to prepare themselves for a little fatigue and privation on their journey to the fields.

In Capetown I spent six days, which brought forth nothing worthy record here. I had the honour to meet Sir H. Barkly and Mr. Southey several times, and their great courtesy left me nothing to ask. Whatever of public interest I gathered from them is introduced in the body of my narrative. On Saturday, March 23rd, I sailed for England, in the *Thames*, Cape and Natal Company's vessel, and, after a pleasant passage, safely reached Gravesend, April 25th, seven months to the day since my departure.

Digitized by Google

SUPPLEMENTARY. A.

ON SOME PECULIARITIES OF THE DIAMOND AS FOUND IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Difficulty in getting information about the Brazilian diamond mines—They seem to be river deposits—The same in India—Tavernier's evidence—The diamond now first found in its birth-place—No rivers to carry the diamonds to the dry fields—No evidence or possibility of floods there—Absence of the coat or skin upon Cape stones—Their superior crystallization—White stones always straight in their outline—Off-coloured, yellow, and coloured, always convex—"Fancy" stones straight as white ones—The splitting of gems—Incredulity of diamond merchants as to this feature of Cape stones—Practical demonstration—My own sad experience—Splitting diamonds in India—Shah Gehan's honesty—What sort of diamonds split—Various instances—The appearance of the split—Masonic marks upon diamonds—Deformities common at the Cape—Extraordinary varieties of deformity—"Carbonate" not found in the South African fields—The uses of carbonate—Cape "carbon"—Cape *bort* differs materially from Brazilian—Comparative worthlessness of Cape *bort*—Speculation founded on these various differences—The yield of diamonds in South Africa—The yield of New Rush, Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, and the River diggings—Quantities held back by our Leviathans.

THIS chapter will not be learned at all. It is but little I know of chemistry, and less, perhaps, of mineralogy. Nor do I profess to have entered the arcanum of the jewel merchant's craft, and mastered its delicate secrets. Only those peculiarities which are visible to the unskilled but observant eye will be noted here,—peculiarities which, I think, have not been generally marked even on the fields. But it may be that a dealer in precious stones will smile at my information as very stale, consisting of facts which he has known from the earliest—and never mentioned

Digitized by Google

to a soul or to himself. There is much of this latent knowledge about the world.

It should be premised, also, that I have failed to obtain such an accurate report of the Brazilian mines as would be wished. There is abundance of print on the subject, most diverse and exhaustive accounts apparently, but when one comes to search for any particular fact, that very particular is found wanting. The sort of information I seek for, in Brazilian reports, is just that which I propose to supply in this chapter, devoted to the Cape. It is only by comparison of differences and concordances that we can advance in this field of discovery.

Diamonds in South Africa are found in a limy, chalky grit, nodulated, that is, bound together in smaller or larger lumps, from the measure of a football to that of a pea. The grit is very dry and of considerable hardness, so that a heap of it looks like shingle on the sorting board. I do not understand that the diamond is found under these conditions anywhere else. It is discovered in a limy stratum at the Brazils, I find, but rarely, and always waterworn. The river beds are the treasure-houses there. In India, for the most part, it seems to have been the same case; though at one large field, five days' journey from Golconda, the diamonds were hooked out from crevices of the rock. "In the neighbourhood of the mines," says Tavernier, "the earth is sandy, covered with rocks and thickets; something like the environs of Fontainebleau. In these rocks there are many veins, sometimes half a finger wide, and sometimes double of this. The miners have short iron instruments, hooked at the end, which they thrust into the veins, and so drag out the sand or earth collected there. This earth they load into convenient vessels, and therein are the diamonds found."* No one reading this description can doubt that the jewels were lodged in the crevices by water power. Of

* Tavernier's "Voyages des Indes," lib. ii., p. 327, *et seq.* (Paris edition, 1692). This excellent traveller, a jewel merchant by profession, gives us the earliest and most complete account of the mines called Golconda.

Digitized by Google

Gani, or Coulour, which was the most prolific of mines in Tavernier's day, we have not such an accurate account as to the conditions under which the gems were found. It seems, however, that the mines lay in a plain, surrounded by lofty mountains, and traversed by a large river. "The space between the town and the mountains is a flat, which they dig over, and in which the diamonds are discovered. The nearer they approach the mountain, the larger the stones; but if one go above a certain level, none at all are found." In this case, also, it will seem probable that the great river, which flows from the hills, carried the gems to their resting-place. The other Indian mines were simply river washings.

From what I can gather, this appears to be manifestly the case in Brazil. There should be works extant that would put this matter beyond doubt, and it is not indolence that would prevent me from consulting them. But after some research, ranging over a score or two of French and English volumes, written in every method, easy-going Madame de Barrera, and utilitarian Mawe, I find myself still unable to argue with authority. All seem to speak, however, of river diggings only. Mawe inquires for the matrix of the diamond, and none will undertake a theory on the subject. We read of streams diverted. A mine is always a river. But there is not a working man upon the South African fields who will not theorize upon the matrix.

What I wish to argue from these cited instances is this: that the diamond is now first discovered in its birthplace. No one who sees the long grey plains of Africa, waterless and sandy, can believe that floods have carried thither the treasures we unearth. In the first place, there are no rivers to perform the office; in the second, one must ask whence the rivers should wash down the stones? Nothing is more certain than the perfect destitution of our mountains in this respect. The Vaal and the Orange Rivers, the Mod and the Riet, all contain diamonds, waterworn for the most part. Hundreds or thousands of years have these lain, grinding mid the pebbles, brought, I should take it, from some

Digitized by Google

diamond kopjes, washed away and vanished, which stood beside the stream. There is not the mark of water on a single stone at the dry diggings. It is on kopjes, too, on gentle ridges of the plain, we look for them. Heavy showers will carry them down the slope, but only after heavy showers are they there discovered. Were water the agent that bore them, they had been dropped upon the level. And what possible floods could lay successive strata of crystals, along the crest of a ridge, to the depth of a hundred feet, and ever so many deeper, perhaps? I went to the diamond fields impressed with the current notion of a matrix to be sought in lofty ground or caverns; a week's experience convinced me that in the kopjes where we find the diamond, there was it formed by nature. With this belief firmly planted, the smallest specialty of the Cape crystal had value in my eyes. We have at length, if I be right, the advantage of studying the diamond in its earliest and simplest condition.

The very first question that strikes the observer is, of course, the most difficult: by what specific operation of nature's chemistry were they created in this spot? I have not so much confidence in my scientific phraseology as to trust my own impressions to the criticism of querulous theorists.

The foremost quality of the Cape diamond which attracts attention, is its freedom from the coat or skin which wraps the stone of India or Brazil. Both of these are found bearing an envelope, too hard for removal, which is generally tinged with green or blue. Under this skin the diamond appears to be opaque. We have nothing of this sort at the Cape. It is mentioned as an extraordinary fact that several Brazilian gems have been discovered bearing a natural polish, and the four diamonds in Charlemagne's crown are also noted for this circumstance. But it is the rarest of events to find one in the dry diggings of South Africa which is not more or less polished. On the river they sometimes wash out one that bears the "skin," but very rarely. Frosted stones, and stones but semi-transparent, are very

Digitized by Google

common, forming, indeed, a large majority of the river yield, but these appear to be only scratched and ground, like glass, by centuries of rubbing with the pebbles. It is no skin formed over them, nor ever bears a taint of colour, if the under stone be white. A parcel of Brazilian stones looks like emeralds, sapphires, rubies, and topazes, so brilliant is the outer colour; Cape diamonds are bright as glass. We have seen a proof how rare is the Brazilian skin with us, in that tale I told of the man at Klipdrift, who picked up an eighty-eight carat so enveloped, and offered it all round the camp for a bottle of beer.

A quality which seems to be dependent on one cause with that above mentioned is the superior crystallization of Cape stones. I have seen no Brazilian gems so beautifully regular, so sharply angled, and so even in their lines, as those of the dry diggings. The former often show as round as marbles, nor are their angles ever sharp; but pencil could not draw more accurate octohedrons or dodecahedrons than the majority of ours. The fluted angles of those found at Bultfontein are beautiful in themselves. I attribute this feature also to the fact that they are found as nature made them.

In regard to this matter of crystallization, there is a curious observation I made, which may prove to possess great value. A white stone, or one very, very slightly off-coloured, has square lines and right angles. One more distinctly coloured has not straight, but bowed lines, and its angles are obtuse. I cannot but think that if one had a measuring instrument of sufficient accuracy, one might find that the slightest shade of colour produces its effect in this direction. The rule of yellow stones, or green, or bluish tinged, but not tinged so deeply as to come under the title of "fancy," is evident at a glance. What may be the meaning of this difference? Is the white stone demonstrated, by the evidence of nature herself, to be the superior crystal? I do not know, but there is assuredly a valuable secret hidden here.

This observation becomes doubly curious when one remarks

Digitized by Google

that "fancy stones" are as straight and rectangular as white; that is, when the colour becomes *positive*, as blue, or green, or rose, and not merely *negative*, as in the stones called "coloured," which are white ones spoiled, they follow the rule of perfect gems. Once, also, I saw a fancy yellow diamond, deep orange in tone, which had straight lines, but only once. The yellow in general, however fine its tint, fails in this respect. It is needless to tell any one that fancy stones are so called because they command a fancy price. You cannot value a jewel which may be called unique. I have seen a diamond green as any emerald that could be found; I have also seen one blue, of the weight of twenty-five carats, the colour of a summer's sky. Brown are not so rare, but rose is scarcely known. A hundred and twenty pounds was refused for a gem of this tint, weighing but three carats, found by a Hollander who showed it me; it was the colour of a balass ruby. Orange yellow are comparatively common, but they command a high price. When, in a general way, one talks of "yellow stones," one means "coloured" of that tint, not "fancy;" on the fields we incorrectly call them "off-colour." The true "off-colour" has no distinct tinge at all.

No peculiarity of Cape diamonds has excited such attention from the trade as their liability to crack and split. I have had business with merchants here who still refuse to credit that they do so. The largest dealers, however, have found cause to yield a reluctant faith. Parcels consigned to them have returned the *weight* of invoice upon a *greater number* of stones; some, in fact, have "exploded" in the transit, and one large gem is represented by a number of fragments. My own experience in this matter is peculiarly unfortunate. I bought a gem as perfect as the ace of diamonds in shape, and clear as a crystal ball. Two months it lay in the safe at Bultfontein, and then split across one corner, bringing on me a loss of £40. A second, not less fine, of fifteen carats, split in the night after purchase. I could not sell under a loss of £65, and so I brought it to England. The merchants

Digitized by Google

here predicted dreadful things if I should have it cut, and none would make a bid within £100 of cost price. Determined to risk the worst, I had it cut, and happily falsified this evil prophecy. This example, however, proves nothing. The cutters, unwilling to leave so fine a stone open to any risk, had it *polished* into shape, not cut with the wheel. I half regret he was so cautious; but of my depreciated purchase I obtained a perfect gem of six and a half carats. The crack had diminished its size by a carat, or perhaps more, and had carried off my profit; but things might have been worse.

A hundred years ago dealers would not have felt incredulous upon this subject. This generation of ours never heard of "splitting diamonds," but our forefathers knew something about it. Tavernier tells of a mine "between Coulour and Raolconda," which was closed by order of Shah Gehan, on account of this property of its yield. The diamonds were covered, as were the best of other mines at Golconda, with a green coating, very handsome and transparent. The brittle stones looked more brilliant and more promising than others, as indeed do ours at the Cape. They would bear rubbing down with diamond dust of their own quality, but flew to pieces at touch of the wheel. To repress the frauds continually arising from the sale of these splitting crystals, Shah Gehan closed the mine, but not before our East Indian Company's presidents at Surat had been badly bitten. It may safely be predicted that some enterprising fellow will open that ground again one of these days.

I do not mean to put these Indian diamonds forward as quite similar to our Cape glassy stones which crack. There is a resemblance between the two, but important differences also. South African diamonds of the sort appear to be as hard as any others. It is no accident, no force which splits them. There is not the slightest danger of their exploding into minute fragments on the wheel as did the beautiful forty-two carat of the Surat president's. Burst to pieces they do, but by the action of internal force. I

Digitized by Google

bring Tavernier forward as an evidence that cracking diamonds were not quite unknown formerly.

Though we have not yet secured any clue towards the identification of crystals that *will* split, every digger knows at a glance the crystal that *will not*. If, in turning and raking the stuff upon his table, he come upon a "coloured" gem, perfect in shape and water, he wipes it clean with calm delight, and puts it in his pocket; so does he with flawed and irregular stones; so also with the purest white, if frosted, specked, or of imperfect crystallization. But should he find beneath his scrape a "fancy stone," straight in its lines and angles, but rosy or blue or green, without a spot or flaw, he shakes his head, and wishes it were lunch time, as he puts it by. Flashes across his sight a lovely star of diamond, pure as glass, with a greasy look and feel, covered with the signs of nature's freemasonry, he gives his prize one frenzied glance, thrusts it between his lips, and, overturning scrape and stool, bolts down into the camp, nor stops till he reach the open tent of his pet kooper. A moment to recover breath and then he enters. The kooper looks, and turns the shining stone about, and shakes his head. "How long have you had this out?" he asks. "Give you my sacred word, sir, and any oath you like to name, I picked up that there find last Tuesday was a month!" And the bargain proceeds with great rapidity. The gem may be a treasure, or it may crack to-day, or next week; often, a month hence, or, as in my case, in two months. Most diggers who have held good claims have stories to tell upon this theme. A gentleman who travelled with me to the fields, sold a remarkably beautiful find one day. The purchaser had not so much money in his pocket, and the stone remained with Mr. D—— until next day. During the night it exploded, falling into three pieces. One of our large merchants bought a superb fancy stone, chocolate colour, matchless, perhaps, in the world. It burst into countless fragments two or three hours after purchase. I myself had given me a handsome brown fellow, about a carat.

Digitized by Google

I saw it overnight, a perfect octohedron, pellucid as water flowing over a sandy bed. Next day the donor brought it me, a crackled object, all its colour fled to one angle. This, by-the-bye, is the only instance I have heard of colour shifting. All stones, therefore, having lines and angles mathematically true are viewed with suspicion. Yellow, blue, green, and brown "coloured" are never true and they do not crack. It is not, of course, a large proportion of fine stones that do so, or trade in them would be at an end. Perhaps two per cent. of such split at New Rush, and one per cent. at Dutoitspan. Bultfontein finds are very little liable to the accident. I did not meet with any one who had seen the crack appear. It mostly shows itself in the morning, and thus we have a further ground for speculating that the atmosphere may be the cause. River stones never suffer. The crack is generally a mere shoot, if one might so speak. I saw no instance in which it struck the body, or main depth of the stone. In general, one corner is affected, and the split goes in a meaningless manner, starting, as one might say, nowhere, nor coming to a logical termination. I mean that it does not strike the outside at either end, but appears in the middle surface, shaped like a tight-strung bow. Many diggers believe that a long immersion in *aqua fortis* will prevent the misfortune, but the large buyers whom I consulted do not share this hope. They say that there is no danger whilst the diamond lies in acid, but that it may very well crack when taken out. From what I can learn—but be this received as a statement resting on the most imperfect evidence—there is less fear of these artificial flaws, if we may call them so, spreading and deepening under the wheel than of the natural flaws.

I have referred above to "the signs of nature's freemasonry." By this I mean the triangles and compasses which are imprinted on the finest of our Cape stones. These extraordinary marks occur upon one or two sides of the crystal, impressed in its substance. They may be found on a stone of any quality, if of

Digitized by Google

good crystallization, but in a first-class white gem they are never absent. It is unnecessary to add that the purity and value of the diamond are not at all injured thereby, but rather the contrary; for some buyers confidently believe that a stone so printed must turn out more brilliant than one plain. On gems imperfectly crystallized, frosted, or rounded, the masonic signs do not appear.

In South Africa we find conglomerations or clusters of diamond crystals. I had believed this deformity to be special to our fields, but, at the last moment, my friend, Mr. M. J. Posno, tells me I mistake. Distortions of the sort have been sent from the Brazils, but so very, very rarely, that "the trade" in general knows nothing of them, nor do museums possess a specimen. At the Cape such things are common. I have seen the most surprising agglomerates. In Mr. Dunn's pamphlet, p. 12, he mentions that a crystal "found at Bultfontein, weighing about four carats, had another of one carat partly imbedded in its side. It fitted so nicely, that if pressed in, it required some little force to detach it." I have not observed an example quite so curious as this, of which the account reached me from other sources before I met Mr. Dunn's paper. But clusters of crystals, clinging together at the base, the side, or, in fact, anyhow, I have often seen. Amongst the deformities must be classed, I suppose, some very graceful gems. The pretty diamond of Bultfontein is almost always planed off along each edge. I have also seen an octohedron of which each edge has vanished in a groove. Mr. Dunn speaks of a diamond octohedral in form, but with a rectangular pit replacing each of its six points. Crystals marked with the impress of others occur very commonly, and not rare are those which have a regular cavity from which a smaller gem has dropped in some unknown convulsion. Of the irregular forms common to us with the Brazilians, such as *macles*, *druses*, and so on, I do not speak.

In another part of this work, allusion has been made to that very astonishing phenomenon, the diamond imbedded in a spawn of tiny gems. I cannot guarantee more than two instances of this,

Digitized by Google

nor can I tell where they may now be found. Both were purchased with the hope of a re-sale to museums, and one, which I had almost made up my mind to buy, was subsequently sold to either Berlin or Vienna, as I heard. The reader is referred to page 164, for an account of this latter marvel.

I think I have now mentioned all those peculiarities which specially belong to the Cape diamond, and those which, not being special, are *commonly* found in these diggings alone. It remains only to speak of the negative qualities, and to risk a few timid observations on the creation of the diamond.

There is, in the Brazils, a substance called "carbonate." It is intensely hard, grey-black to the sight, irregular in form. It is found, so far as I can discover, in company with the diamond at those diggings. Scientific men have not yet decided how to class it, but common sense tells us that it is a diamond imperfectly crystallized—in fact, unfinished.

The discovery of carbonate as an article of use was made about fifteen years ago. At that date, a Brazilian called upon Mr. Posno, the well-known merchant, armed with some bags of this mineral, which he proposed to deliver, in any quantity, at the rate of 3*d*. per carat. Mr. Posno was struck with its appearance and evident hardness. He took a small quantity and sent to the cutters of Amsterdam, who never even tried it, but reported unfavourably. In consequence, Mr. Posno declined the bargain, and thereby ruined one of the finest *coups* on record. Carbonate is now used in preference to bort (of which hereafter) for all purposes belonging to the diamond cutter's trade. It is also employed indiscriminately with bort in the new boring machines. The price at present runs from 18*s*. to 20*s*. per carat.

This most valuable mineral is not found upon our fields. We have, indeed, a substance called, and very properly called, "carbon," the fragments of which are bright and very hard, but not hard enough to be useful. An adventurous spirit once bought up the finds of this material at 5*s*. the carat, thinking it the true

Digitized by Google

Brazilian carbonate, but his speculation only brought about a total ruin.

The Cape bort also is very much inferior to that of the Brazils, commanding not three quarters of the price. This is a rough and imperfect species of diamond, badly flawed, discoloured, and rendered useless for all ornamental purposes by its cross grain—were other things put aside. Less of it is turned out in South Africa, proportionately, than in the Brazils. From the latter fields also, we get a quality more highly crystallized, and more regular in form; the beneficial action of water counting somewhat in the last advantage. Cape bort, however, seems to be intrinsically of an inferior quality, as is reported to me by those who have used it both in diamond-cutting and in boring rocks.

Looking at these facts, the imperfect hardness of our carbon—which I take, with the Brazilian carbonate, to be the diamond in a state of arrested development; the absence of carbonate; the inferiority of our bort; the bowed and rounded lines of the vast majority of gems, which are, at the same time, off colour, or coloured; the frequency of distortions; the rarity of clean-cut, colourless stones;*—looking at these things, shall I venture to surmise that possibly the conditions under which the diamond forms itself, were less perfect in South Africa than in Brazil or India? The conclusion seems to me reasonable.

What has been the yield of diamonds from our diggings? It is almost impossible to approximate. Mr. Webb, who was more likely to know than any one I think of, put it down, in December last, as £3,000,000 sterling. New Rush alone has probably turned out as much as this at the time I write. The other diggings, taken together, could be but little behind. The contribution of the first three years, before Dutoitspan was discovered,

* Many merchants, the majority perhaps, deny that one white stone has yet been offered from the Cape. The larger dealers, however, readily admit that thousands of such have passed through their hands. In comparison they are very rare.

Digitized by Google

counted but a few hundred thousand of this aggregate. Captain Rolleston and his friends convulsed society when they passed through Capetown with a quarter of a pint of gems, at Midsummer, in 1870. At the latter end of this year, the dry diggings began to yield, and in July, 1871, New Rush was struck. The deluge followed. When I reached the spot, in November, the meanest estimate of the finds, in that digging alone, was £50,000 a week. Dutoitspan yielded, probably, three-fifths of this. Bultfontein scored, perhaps, a bare £2,000. All the river camps, £5,000. But I am inclined to rate New Rush much higher. The mere exports at this time were set at £300,000 a month, and every digger knows that in Mr. Rhodes's tent, Mr. Smut's, Mr. Bantje's, and half-a-dozen more, there were diamonds kept in "tobacco jars!" I who write, have seen them poured in a dazzling cascade upon the table. Mr. Truter, too, showed me a noble tumbler-full. The Leviathans, therefore, did not contribute their proportion to the export. The finest they kept back, in hopes of a better market, where they themselves could deal face to face with the Posnos and the Costers.

Speaking with all the earnestness that print demands, I declare my conviction that New Rush had yielded, in March last, at the average rate of £12,000 to £15,000 a-day from the previous August. This would give from £2,500,000 to £3,000,000. By Mr. Webb's report—a witness as cool, clear-headed, and unprejudiced as could be found, and one with exceptionable means of information—this would be under the mark. I think it most probable that he is correct, but I give what appears to me the truth as well as I could gather it.

Dutoitspan, with a much less show of stones, has yielded more than the half of this, perhaps two-thirds. Bultfontein, richest of all upon the surface, and giving fortunes to many in the first few days, has perhaps produced £250,000. The river diggings may have returned half a million.

The gross yield, then, would reach at least £5,000,000 in March.

Digitized by Google

And I have already recorded my conviction that there is as yet little diminution. But, when New Rush is worked out,—the end of this year I put as a maximum of time,—when Dutoitspan is worked by the Company, there will be a sad falling off, not in the yield only, but in the market supply. For I hold it as certain that the Company would sell its diamonds in such a manner as would gradually raise their value to its former level.

As to new fields, I have repeatedly discussed the probabilities. In the following chapter they will be recapitulated.

Digitized by Google

SUPPLEMENTARY. B.

PROSPECTS OF THE DIAMOND FIELDS.

Fifty thousand diggers and the diggings all occupied—The old fields must be worked out by companies—How many diggers now pay their way—Business in danger of a glut—The economy of the colonial diggers and the boers—An instance of the way they work—Such diggers still three-fourths of the population—My own experience on the fields recapitulated—Price of diamonds at the diggings—Specimen advertisements of claims—The question of a falling off in the supply—The Home market more satisfactory of late—Silent conspiracy of all interested to depreciate the yield—Figures adduced in support of the assertion—Examination of this evidence—The late robberies prove it to be valueless—No prospect of new diggings—Valuable fields exist, but far in the interior—My opinion that the supply is as yet undiminished—An ugly prospect—The result foretold long since—Impossibility of sustaining prices under the present system—Immense ultimate benefit to the colony of these diggings.

THIS speculation divides itself into several branches. There is, first, the future of the diamond mines now existing; second, the future of the population now working in them. These two questions cannot well be separated in a comprehensive survey of the prospect. Brutally putting aside considerations of humanity, nothing is easier than to declare that things will find a level: that Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, and Old de Beers will continue to yield for a certain calculable space: that New Rush will be worked out within a given time, and then an end. But his would be a grave mistake who should suppose that 50,000 men, of stubborn Dutch or fighting English breed, can be so simply thrust outside a calculation. In calmly weighing the chances of the future, we must have regard to some points other than mere trade interests. Third, there is to be considered the chance of new discoveries:

Digitized by Google

and, fourth, the effect such will have upon the diamond digging industry.

The richest of all our mines, the richest ever worked within historic memory, need not detain us for a moment—New Rush will be worked out, come what may, and in a very few months. Its wealth is so enormous, and the claimholders in it are so far independent, that, be the market rate ever so low, they will persist in clearing it. The other diggings stand in a different position. There are claims now working in Dutoitspan and Old de Beers which rival in value those of New Rush; but the vast majority, whatever their wealth, are not so situated as to tempt capitalists. The reason of this reluctance I have stated several times, especially on page 135. It is certain that those elder kopjes cannot be worked out by independent diggers. A company, perhaps on the co-operative principle, must take them in hand. When the bankers, tradesmen, rich farmers, and successful diggers who own the claims of New Rush—though many of them have never seen their property—find their profits at an end, they will turn their attention to the elder kopjes. To work them it will be necessary to cut a road right through, at the level of the veldt. In this deep cutting a tramway will be laid, and the whole mass of earth will thus be carted out for sorting at a convenient distance from the workings; and in course of time Dutoitspan digging, and Bultfontein, and Old de Beers will be levelled to the ground.

You will perceive that I do not credit any such fall in prices as will cause the industry to be unprofitable, when carried out on the large scale. Twenty New Rushes could not produce that result. But I do declare, again and again, that individual diggers, working for their daily bread, cannot hope to clear expenses at this present time, nor ever again. Each foot of ground that can reasonably be expected to yield a profit, and is workable, is occupied already; nor will the owners turn out unless for an exorbitant sum. There are thousands who work their claims with heart-

Digitized by Google

breaking industry: but how many of them, at the week's end, have earned a reasonable wage? I should be afraid to set down my own belief upon that subject. Rather let us put it at the estimation of a very sanguine friend, who calculates that twenty per cent. pay their way. How is it, then, you will ask, that the remaining eighty per cent. cling to the spot? To that question I shall recur presently; suffice it to remind you that the fascination of gambling will lead men to endure much greater privations than await them on the fields. For all that has happened, and for all that may yet befall, one blow of the pick may make a man's fortune. But these fellows have at least claims; those coming up, unless they buy, are in danger of finding no place to work at all. They will demand new fields, and I would not have it supposed improbable that they may find what they seek, somewhere or other. But this brings us into the desperate dilemma which reflecting men perceive before them. *Without* new fields, the crowds arriving cannot live; *with* them, or with one, the present race of diggers horribly fear their dwindling profits will vanish altogether. The numbers that are hurrying up may be calculated from the fact that I met twenty-one poor fellows tramping it, and five laden carts and twelve waggons, between Bultfontein and Belmont in one day; and this is not the most popular road. Every vessel that arrives is full of them. All the colony is in motion. Already, as I have said before, there is pauperism to no small amount on the fields. A young and trustworthy fellow can still find ample opportunities of employment, especially if he speak the Dutch *patois*. But I am not sure that shopkeeping, and business in general, is not in danger of being glutted as thoroughly as diamond digging. With carriage at a shilling a pound from Port Elizabeth, and forty shillings the hundred from Capetown, there can be but a starvation margin on the retail price of goods as they are sold at this time, be they ever so bad and dear. And not more than one in five of those arriving can speak Dutch. Living is cheap enough at the fields; for two shillings a day one may sleep and

board at the hotels, and one may live in a tent for a fifth of that amount. But the new-comers cannot afford even this moderate expense. What is before them but starvation, and before the craft of diamond digging but ruin?

Were the crowd of workers immigrants, there could be no alternative. But it is not so. Most of them, even yet, are colonial born, and one-third at least are boers. Diamond digging with great part of them is an episode; their occupation is farming. Whilst one of the family—father, or son, or younger brother, as the case may be—treks off to the fields, the other members look after things at home. At seed-time and harvest and shearing, when hands are in request, the wanderer trots back to the farm, and does his work, and starts away again. From time to time they send him up a bag of meal, or of dried flesh (*biltong*), or other produce. He has no need to spend a farthing. If he were not digging diamonds, he would be drowsing and loafing at home. Whether prices rule high or low is not a real loss to him; a £10 note in a month is at least all profit. I will give you an instance of the way boers work. I was walking with the manager of the South African Exploration Company. We met a dingy old farmer going to his work on Bultfontein. "Good morning, uncle!" said Mr. Fry. "Good morning, brother!" returned the boer. "How are your finding, uncle?" asked Mr. Fry. "Oh, brother," he replied, "I am very unlucky." "That's because you don't send your children to school, but let them grow up like Kaffirs," said Mr. Fry severely. "So the pastor says," returned the Dutchman, much impressed; "I'll finish their shoes to-night, and send them all to the new school to-morrow." "Ah, that's right! now, what have you found?" "Brother," he said solemnly, "I have been at work ever since November"—this was March—"and I have found but a two-carat in Christmas week; I sold it for £7." "Then surely he will be thinking of going home?" I observed to Mr. Fry. "Oh, no," my companion replied. "Tell me, uncle, do you mean to give it up?" "Why should I give it up, brother?

Digitized by Google

They have just sent me a bag of 'mealies' (Indian-corn), and I have £6 in my pocket. My wife and children are here—why should I give it up?" Why, indeed? The old fellow doubtless had his waggon to live in; he had brought a roll of leather for the children's shoes, a roll of corduroy and a roll of calico for the dress of either sex. His oxen were growing fat with nothing to do. Why should he not stop another six months, or six years if it comes to that?

With this condition of things in mind, the forebodings of the Capetown Government will appear exaggerated. Putting New Rush on one side—as we may properly do in regard to these questions—the colonial diggers are still three-fourths, or more, I think, of the population. Let prices fall as they may, these will not starve. But, on the other hand, they must have a reasonable prospect of success, or they will not leave home to gamble. That prospect they have no longer. Without a capital of some hundreds, no man can now expect to obtain an adequate return for his risk and labour. An illustration is worth much argument. The story of my own digging at New Rush is this:—

After a great expenditure of time and patience, I thought I had found a claim which would be profitable to work. In the course of these investigations, I examined ten or eleven spots, all quarter claims, 7½ ft. by 30 ft., or less, varying in price from £900 to £220; the bit for which £900 was asked measured 7 ft. by 4 ft., and I deeply regret that my purse did not enable me to fulfil the inclination I had of buying it; the ultimate purchaser turned out £400 the first afternoon. A quarter-claim was at length discovered which seemed to promise well. My working partners approved, and I bought it for £365, including a Scotch cart, in bad repair, two mules, and harness. This was on Dec. 12th. The very first day of working, a portion of the road gave way, just as my partners climbed out, throwing ten or twelve tons of surface soil into the claim, which was worked about twenty feet deep. On the 21st, found two diamonds, the largest three-

Digitized by Google

quarter carats. On my return from Waterboer's country, six more, all chips, were presented to me. On the 6th of January, my mules fell down a claim; we lost all the load of "stuff," and one mule died. This accident demanded the outlay of £15 for a pair of donkeys. On the 8th, we found a lovely gem of two and seven-eighths carats, with some chips. On the 11th, my cart was broken in collision with an ox-waggon. On the 16th, we sold all our finds for £32, of which one-half went to the workers, leaving me £16 interest for the investment, from which must be deducted 10*s.* for the license. On the 16th, our donkeys bolted, and were never more seen, leaving me £1 profit on six weeks' labour. Then the Kaffirs ran away, and other mischances happened. So, when accounts came to be made up at the termination of our agreement, it appeared that the profit of the speculation was exactly £5 to me in two months, deducting the license money. Our diamonds fetched £42, to be divided in equal shares. I sold the remaining mule and the cart for £21, and have thus £339 to receive from that claim, which I devoutly wish I may get.

This is the story of an adventure in digging, not at Bultfontein, or any "speculative" spot, but at the great Colesberg Kopje itself. How many of my friends have the like experience! The biggest diamond in the world may lie beneath the flooring of my claim at this very moment, but a working-man would have starved in looking for it. The expenses of digging in those deep holes are great. My partners were hardworking men, and they did it cheaply. We contrived to get along with three Kaffirs, who cost £2 each to buy—an assignment of their labour, that is—and £1 a month, with board, apiece. If the digger do not own a cart, he must pay 2*s.* a load, which will mount up to 10*s.* a day; the more energetic the work, the more expensive. Your Kaffirs, one way with another, cost nearly four shillings a week apiece, for food, &c. Your mules, if you have them, run up a bill of five shillings a day. And there is the capital needed for tent, furni-

Digitized by Google

ture, tables, harness, rope, pulleys, timber, buckets, and a thousand other items more. Besides all these, a man must eat, be it remembered, unless he die, which is not improbable. How, then, shall it be made to pay the average emigrant, when the best white stones bring but £2 10*s.* to £4 10*s.** the "running carat," of four carats and under, whilst the largest and finest off-colour fetches £2 to £3? A fifty carat of this description, as clear as tinted glass, of the finest shape, would be pitched to you with delight at an offer of £200. How many fifty carat stones had been found since the world began, until these marvellous mines were opened? Five years ago, £5,000 would scarcely have bought the gem for which a man is overjoyed to get the offer of £200.

All the experience I could gather confirms the belief that no inch of land tried and proved to be valuable, can be had cheap. Every rich digger keeps his eyes well open, and one of the neighbours snaps up the claim for sale before the public even hears of it. Now and then a man who has made his fortune, or has fallen ill, demands such a price for the claim vacated, he must needs come before the public. Here are advertisements taken at random from the newspapers of the fields:—

For Sale by Public Auction,
THAT WONDERFUL PIT OF DIAMONDS,
Known as
B. HAYES and W. JAKINS'
HALF-CLAIM, NO. 526,
Situate in Road No. 9, Colesberg Kopje.

This Claim is situated between McIntosh and Glynn's Claims; and it is a notorious fact, that the former has been sworn to be worth £2,000, whilst the latter has actually been sold for £1,500. Any further comments on the part of the Auctioneers would only swell the size of the advertisement, without adding any essential item to its intrinsic value.

* The price of white diamonds was too high during my time to yield a profit. We scarcely more than recover at home the sums paid for our bargains over yonder.

Digitized by Google

Private offers will be entertained, and the full Half-Claim will be divided in Three Lots, to suit the convenience of purchasers.

ROTHSCHILD & SCHERMBRUCKER,
Auctioneers.

VALUABLE DIAMONDIFEROUS GROUND FOR SALE AT THE NEW RUSH,

Of Far-famed Celebrity,

In Road No. 4, Claim 221, 1½-Claim from Reef, one ½-Claim. The above Claim has yielded to the present proprietor 1 diamond of 65½ carats, 1 do. 28, 1 do. 22, besides 250 smaller ones. The Claim adjoining has rewarded the labour of the owner with one gem of 161 carats, one of each 33, 28, 24, 20, 19, and 15.

Another, that comprising ¾ of Claim No. 225, which has returned to the owner one diamond of each 24, 19, 15, 13, and 12 respectively, besides innumerable smaller diamonds. The adjoining Claim has produced diamonds of 70, 60, and 50 carats. These facts are conclusive proofs of the value of the ground. The party working the remaining quarter of Claim No. 225 is bound to convey all the gravel, rubbish, &c., from the Claim free of charge, failing which, the fourth quarter reverts to the party or parties purchasing the above three-quarter Claim.

The above Ground will be Sold at the end of this month.

***** Application to be made at the Store of Mr. P. McNOUGHTON, Main Street, or at the residence of the Proprietor,**

***New Rush*, *5th February*, 1872.** **M. DE KOCK.**

I have no reason to suppose these descriptions untrue. Their statements passed uncontested at the sale.

It is alleged that the supply of diamonds from the Cape is falling off. To determine this point no figures are available, and it is the most difficult of subjects upon which to speculate. But I shall venture to express the opinion that, if decrease there be, it is too small to produce effect on prices. Holders in this country point to the upward tendency of the market, but I think this a natural rebound from the panic of some months ago. In Capetown, and at the diggings, it is heresy to believe that one-half as many diamonds are found at this present time as were picked up awhile since. To hear these reports, one might think Dutoitspan worn out, New Rush lapsing again into a sheep-walk.

Digitized by Google

I fear there is an unexpressed conspiracy afloat to depreciate the yield. To such a point has the ruinous fall of prices brought us: A man would be shouted down upon the fields who dared to hint that the discovery of diamonds approaches that of last December. Were I digger, I, too, would persuade myself, and shout with the rest; but being, or striving to be, unprejudiced, I fear the verdict must be against both press and diggers. Mind you, it behoves a man to speak with the utmost caution in such a case, but I think, I think the evidence adduced to prove a diminution of supply is worthless. Capetown people point to the figures at the custom-house, and triumphantly demonstrate that the hundreds of thousands shipped some months back by each mail, have dwindled down to a paltry five thousand. But we who come from the fields have our answer to this, though we do not always state it—for why damp the poor folks' spirits? In former times, the *Standard* and other banks used to insure diamonds, and forward them through the custom-house to London. Since a mail-bag, containing gems to the insured value of £20,000 was lost on the veldt by Hopetown, this system has been abruptly stopped—the bag was found and brought to the post-office by a passing traveller, but such a warning proved enough. Thus, the large diamond buyers, deprived of their security, are now in the habit of sending a clerk down to the coast, and forwarding their parcel thence by post. Smaller buyers, and diggers, send them direct from the fields in this manner; and so it happens that the custom-house knows nothing of the larger parcels. Diggers have no returns to quote in witness of their belief. They only say, "Ask the merchants!" or, "Ask So-and-So what he used to find, and what he finds at present!" But the merchants know very well that scarcely half of what is found now reaches their hands, but goes direct to England; and So-and-So, who piously declares he has not dug out a single chip since this day week, may be suspected of participation in the silent plot.

Thus, then, so far as my opinion goes—and only as a very

Digitized by Google

diffident opinion do I give it—there is no great decrease in the yield. It will seem strange at first sight that all parties should combine to depreciate their own chosen industry, but the sense of the thing is easy enough to understand. Diamonds are falling every mail—every mail. The stones which fetched £1,000 in December last are not now saleable for more than £400. Yellow and off-coloured are at a reduction greater still. Therefore it is, to reassure home buyers, to reassure themselves, to present the resemblance of a bold front in a crisis that looks like Ruin—therefore do all combine, in a tacit understanding, to undervalue the existing fields, and to deride the mere suggestion of a new discovery.*

A whisper of this catastrophe acts often like a red flag on a bull. It means, indeed, utter destruction of the industry, and, in short, eternal smash. But this is a problem we have prominently before us—what chances are there of another digging to compare with the elder ones. I am inclined to think that the probabilities so far are against any such discovery—in this neighbourhood, at least. Spots called rich are from time to time still found upon the river, but we may leave out of contemplation, for this present purpose, those small and scanty but valuable diggings. Men who have shown both means and energy to complete such a work, have again and again assured me that every hillside between the Vaal and the Mod Rivers has been carefully "prospected." I am told that the

* The opinion expressed in these paragraphs was penned at Capetown, in March last. Writing now, in June, the robbery of the mails at New Rush comes very *apropos* to favour my audacious judgment. We find that in *one* bag, from *one* field alone, £30,000 worth of diamonds—at the fields' valuation—was stored at a later date than that discussed above. I could not have stronger corroboration of my view. Supposing that two-thirds of all the New Rush yield was contained in this bag—a most extravagant supposition—we should have £90,000 for that month as the gross return. If all the other fields united give as much, this would make £180,000. But every large diamond buyer now despatches his parcel by a confidential hand to Capetown direct. This class purchases probably half the finds. Making up all the figures, the deplorable accident at New Rush tends to show that the old rate of the Custom-House returns, £300,000 a month, is still about the average.—Q. E. D.

Digitized by Google

New Rush Prospecting Company, consisting of a hundred and one experienced diggers, did actually open up and examine thirty-nine likely spots, being all they could find for twenty miles around. This was, of course, before the evil days got hold upon us. They picked up several diamonds upon the surface, but none underneath. Independently of such direct evidence, the strong probabilities of the case lead one to believe that an exhaustive search would be conducted by many persons and in all directions. The discovery of diggings has hitherto been very rapid. The crowd had been no long time at Pniel before Hebron was struck, nor at Hebron before prospectors hit on Gong-Gong, Cawood's Hope, and all the rest. Thence they speedily worked inshore to Dutoitspan, and, in a few weeks, they struck Bultfontein. The stride from that place to the New Rush took place in a month or two. I cannot but think, therefore, that if any rich spot existed for many miles round, it would have been hit long since. And so I put on one side, until strong evidence turns up, the chance of a new discovery, within such space, or under such circumstances, as would benefit or injure the present population.

For—though this is a parenthesis—there can be no doubt that other fields, of marvellous wealth, exist. I know a spot, a thousand miles perhaps from Bultfontein, where a poor old Dutch schoolmaster picked up seven lovely gems in a morning, and kept them, and had them to show, though still uncertain whether they were diamonds or not. The Kaffirs who come to work tell us of many places where they have seen such stones in great profusion, nor is a Kaffir likely to mistake. Waterboer's property, again, that lying by the Orange River, is vastly rich. But none of these spots affect the digging interest. The crowd will not march a thousand miles further north. Nor will the manager of the London and South African Exploration Company allow their lands to be prospected at present. And therefore, for our purpose, it may be said that no new fields must be expected. Most unquestionably, every ridge that bears diamonds will be worked

Digitized by Google

at no distant day. But, however near that period be, it will be too far to influence the fortunes of this present digging population.

Thus, then, the matter stands. I do not believe that the supply of diamonds is falling off; therefore prices will not rise seriously, if they keep their level. Even now, it does not pay one man in five to dig; very soon it will not pay one in twenty—no, nor, as I think, one in a hundred. People are flocking up by scores a day, and will shortly not be able to find claims. A new discovery would be ruin to all parties. But unless such an event take place, hundreds of willing hands must idle. I can see nought but an ugly prospect. Shrewd men prophesied what the end must ultimately be on the opening of the fields. They said, and I quite agree with them, this pick-and-shovel business is a mistake. Diamonds are not a proper subject for exemplifying the theories of Political Economy. You cannot drown the market with an article only appertaining to the highest luxury—you cannot popularise a traffic in such articles—without swift and sudden catastrophe. These things require the most delicate manipulation, they exact the strictest reticence, they need a hand to hold them back or loose them as occasion asks. You are pursuing a course exactly opposite. You encourage every man who can beg a pick to dig for diamonds, and every clerk who has saved a £5 note to speculate in the findings. Your newspapers astound the world with monstrous stories of unheard-of gems. You publish the *dénouement* of a practical joke as serious fact. You want, and will probably obtain, the establishment of public auctions for the sale of diamonds in the rough. In short, you consistently and successfully pursue an avowed course—that of throwing open this most delicate traffic to the world, like butchering or baking. You have triumphantly succeeded—and the end stands glaring at you! Diamonds are down sixty per cent., and a population of 50,000 souls is in danger of pauperism.

By royal monopoly alone, or by means of great and powerful

Digitized by Google

companies, can jewel digging be made a thriving industry. Into the hands of a company all these public fields must fall, and, thus used, they may benefit the country for generations to come. I am not in the least overlooking the sudden and astonishing activity they have set going through the colony, nor the immense benefit they have wrought. These things are patent. The mere immigration will in the end turn out vastly profitable. But I fear an evil winter must be passed before we reap the harvest. And when that has gone by, when boers and colonists have returned, with pockets full, to their peaceful farms, and pauper diggers have been absorbed into the working population, I venture to expect that the far-famed Diamond Fields will still be crowded with active labourers, working, with no flourish of trumpets, in the service of a wealthy guild. When that time arrives there will be no anxious waiting for the mail, and no suspension of business for days beforehand. For every post will bring in news of a rising market, and "a fall of twenty-five per cent." will never again be the heading of an African newspaper.

* * * * *

I leave these paragraphs untouched, though I am pleased to find that my worst anticipations have not yet been realised. The amazing development of our trade has prevented any further fall in diamonds. A brisk demand, and a wide-spread belief in the near exhaustion of the fields, have led many to speculate. On the spot, better prices are now realised than during my visit. There is indeed already the distress which I foretold. The poor digger cannot live, but the rich is growing richer. Much crime is rife also. Robberies with violence are reported every day. There is riot and dangerous discontent abroad. And, with the first whisper of a break in our commercial fortune, a sudden downfall, more serious than the first, will certainly take place.

Digitized by Google

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

PROCLAMATIONS ANNEXING AND REGULATING THE TERRITORY GRIQUALAND WEST.

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BARKLY,

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof; and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS Captain Nicholas Waterboer, Paramount Chief of the Griqua people and Territory of Griqualand West, with his Raad or Council, has, on behalf of himself and his said people, petitioned Her Britannic Majesty, Queen Victoria, that She would be graciously pleased to accept into Her allegiance him, the said Nicholas Waterboer and his said people, and to declare him and his said people to be British Subjects, and their territory to be British Territory:

2. And whereas Her said Majesty, on receiving the said petition, was graciously pleased to signify Her assent to the prayer thereof, and to authorise me, in Her name, as Her High Commissioner, to grant the said prayer, and to accept the said allegiance, and to declare the said Chief Nicholas Waterboer and his said people to be British subjects, and the territory of the said Chief and people to be British territory, conditionally on the Parliament of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope consenting that the said territory shall become part of the Colony aforesaid, and undertaking to provide for the government and defence thereof, and of the said people:

3. And, whereas the two Houses of Parliament of the said Colony of the Cape of Good Hope by addresses, dated, respectively, the fifth day of August, 1871, and the eighth day of August, 1871, presented to me, have communicated to me that they have resolved that, pending the adjustment of certain

Digitized by Google

disputes therein referred to regarding the boundaries of the said territory and the passing of a law for the annexation of the said territory therein called the Diamond Fields to this Colony, the said Houses were of opinion, respectively, that I should be requested to adopt such measures as might appear to me to be necessary and practicable for the maintenance of order among certain inhabitants of the said territory engaged in searching for diamonds therein, and in the said resolution termed the diggers and the other inhabitants of the said territory, as well as for the collection of revenue and the administration of justice:

4. And, whereas it is necessary for the purpose of so maintaining order, collecting revenue, and administering justice in the said territory that I should, in Her Majesty's name, grant the prayer of the said Chief Nicholas Waterboer and his said people, and assume sovereign jurisdiction in and over the said territory:

5. Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim and declare that from and after the publication hereof, the said Nicholas Waterboer, and the said tribe of the Griquas of Griqualand West shall be, and shall be taken to be for all intents and purposes British subjects, and the territory of or belonging to the said Nicholas Waterboer and the said tribe shall be taken to be British territory, and I hereby require all Her Majesty's subjects in South Africa to take notice of this my Proclamation accordingly.

6. And, whereas the boundaries claimed by the said Nicholas Waterboer and the said Griqua people of Griqualand West as the boundaries of the said territory of or belonging to them, the said Chief and people, have been for some time as to certain part thereof disputed by the President of the South African Republic on behalf of the South African Republic, which lays claim to certain territory lying within the said boundaries, and as to certain other part thereof by the President of the Orange Free State on behalf of the said Orange Free State, which lays claim to certain other territory lying within the said boundaries:

7. And, whereas the disputes as to the said boundaries between the said Chief Nicholas Waterboer and his said people of the one part, and the said South African Republic of the other part, were by articles of agreement, made the first day of March, 1871, between the said President of the South African Republic, on behalf of the said Republic, of the one part, and the said Chief Nicholas Waterboer on behalf of himself and the said Griquas of Griqualand West, of the other part, referred to the investigation, arbitration, and award of certain commissioners in the said articles named, and, in case of the disagreement of the said commissioners, to the award, order and final determination of His Excellency Robert W. Keate, Esquire, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Natal: And whereas the said commissioners disagreed in their award, and the matters in dispute were thereupon submitted, according to the said articles of agreement, to the award, order, and final determination of His Excellency Robert W. Keate, Esquire, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Natal, who duly undertook the duties of final referee in the premises: And whereas the said Robert W. Keate, Esquire, did, on the 17th day of October,

Digitized by Google

1871, make his final award, in writing, and thereby defined the said boundaries in dispute between the said Chief Nicholas Waterboer and the said Griqua people of Griqualand West, of the one part, and the said South African Republic, of the other part, as hereinafter are set out:

8. And whereas the said Chief Nicholas Waterboer has, on his own account and through the mediation of Her Majesty's several High Commissioners for the time being, from time to time, made repeated offers to the President of the Orange Free State for the time being, to submit the disputes as to all the parts of the said boundaries so, as aforesaid, in dispute between the said Nicholas Waterboer and the Griquas of Griqualand West of the one part, and the President of the Orange Free State on behalf of the said State of the other part, to the arbitration and award of arbitrators, to be chosen and nominated by the said parties, which offers have always been refused by and on behalf of the said Orange Free State:

9. And, whereas the said offers have lately been renewed by me as Her Majesty's High Commissioner on behalf of the said Nicholas Waterboer and the said Griquas of Griqualand West as desiring to mediate between the said Chief and people of the one part, and the said Orange Free State of the other, by several letters dated, respectively, the 23rd of January, 1871, the 2nd of March, 1871, the 20th of March, 1871, the 10th of April, 1871, the 25th of April, 1871, and the 13th of May, 1871, addressed to the said President of the Orange Free State, and the said offers were thereby strongly urged on the acceptance of the said President of the Orange Free State on behalf of the said State, which said offers have been steadily refused by the said President on behalf of the said State, or coupled with conditions which are impracticable and impossible, and to which Her Majesty could not agree:

10. And whereas by reason of such continued refusal on the part of the said Orange Free State to submit to the said disputes to any reasonable course of settlement, Her Majesty is compelled to determine the said boundary line between the said territory and the said Orange Free State upon the best evidence which She has been able to obtain, and has therefore authorised me to proclaim the boundary between the said territory of the Griquas of Griqualand West and the territory of the Orange Free State as defined by such evidence: Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim and declare that the said territory of the Griquas of Griqualand West is bounded as follows, that is to say:

11. On the south by the Orange River from the point nearest to Kheis; on the west to the point nearest to Ramah on the east, thence in a northerly direction to David's Graf, near the junction of the Modder and Riet Rivers, thence in a straight line in a northerly direction to the summit of the Platberg, from thence along the line or lines determined by the award of His Excellency Robert W. Keate, Esquire, as such final referee as aforesaid, under the provisions of the said articles of agreement of the first of March, 1871, to the northerly point of the Langeberg,—that is to say, from the said summit of the Platberg, in a straight line in a north-westerly direction along the north-east of Roeloff's Fontein, cutting the Vaal and the Harts Rivers to a point north of

Digitized by Google

Boetsap, thence in a straight line in a westerly direction running between Nelson's Fontein and Koning; thence passing south of Maremane and north of Klip Fontein, in a south-westerly direction, in a straight line to the said northerly point of the Langeberg aforesaid, and thence in a straight line in a southerly direction to Kheis aforesaid, and thence to the nearest point on the Orange River aforesaid.

12. And I further hereby require all Her Majesty's subjects in South Africa to take notice of this my Proclamation, and to render due respect thereto, and to forbear from doing any act or acknowledging any authority in conflict or at variance with the tenor of this my Proclamation as they will answer the same on their allegiance.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, this 27th day of October, 1871.

HENRY BARKLY, Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor,

R. SOUTHEY, Colonial Secretary.

No. 67, 1871.

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BARKLY,

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof; and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS I have by Proclamation of this day's date, No. 67, declared the Sovereignty of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, over the territory of Griqualand West, as defined by my said Proclamation, and it is expedient to make provision for the good government of this said territory, pending the passing of a law to annex the same to the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope:

2. Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim, declare, and make known that, except in so far as I have already proclaimed, or may hereby or hereafter proclaim to the contrary, the laws and usages of the said Colony of the Cape of Good Hope shall be deemed to be the laws of the said territory so far as the same shall not be inapplicable thereto.

3. The laws relating to the sale of wines, malt liquors, and spirituous liquors within the said territory, shall be the same as the laws of the said Colony relating to the same matters, save that the several quarterly licensing boards in the said territory shall, at each meeting thereof, have the like powers as the licensing boards in the said Colony now possess at the March meeting of such boards only.

4. All stamp and license duties, and all fees of office, now payable in the said Colony, shall be payable likewise in the said territory, as if the same were

Digitized by Google

part of the said Colony, and the stamps and fees payable in the Supreme Court and the Court for the Eastern Districts of the Cape of Good Hope shall be payable, as near as may be, in the High Court of Griqualand, in like manner as in the said Supreme Court and Court for the Eastern Districts of the Cape of Good Hope, and all stamps of the said Colony shall be deemed likewise to be stamps for the said territory, and shall be valid therein, and used as if the said territory were part of the said Colony.

5. And whereas I have by another Proclamation, also of this day's date, No. 70, ordained that there shall be a High Court of Justice for the said territory: Now I hereby proclaim, declare, and make known that the laws relating to the Courts of Resident Magistrate in the said Colony of the Cape of Good Hope shall apply also to the Courts of Resident Magistrate in the said territory, save that in all cases where, in the said laws of the said Colony, a Judge of the Supreme Court is required or empowered to do any act, the Recorder of Griqualand shall, within the said territory, be required or empowered to do the like, and wherever the said Supreme Court is, within the said Colony, required or empowered to do any act, the High Court of Griqualand shall, within the said territory, be required or empowered to do the like, and all Resident Magistrates within the said territory shall be bound to act towards the said High Court and the said Recorder respectively, as Resident Magistrates within the said Colony are bound to act towards the said Supreme Court and the Judges thereof, respectively.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, this 27th day of October, 1871.

HENRY BARKLY, Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor.

R. SOUTHEY, Colonial Secretary.

No. 68, 1871.

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BARKLY,

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath; Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof, and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS I have by Proclamation No. 67, dated the 27th instant, declared the Sovereignty of Her Majesty Queen Victoria over the Territory of Griqualand West, as defined by my said Proclamation, and it is expedient to divide the said Territory into Districts, and to erect, constitute, and establish Courts of Resident Magistrates to be held for and within such Districts respectively: Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim, declare, and make known that I have divided the said Territory into three Districts, which shall be called, respectively, the District of Klipdrift, the District of Pniel, and the District of

Digitized by Google

Griqua Town; And that I do hereby erect and establish a Court of Resident Magistrate, to be held for and within each of the said Districts, which Districts shall comprehend the several tracts of country included within the following boundary lines, viz. :—

District of Klipdrift.

2. A line commencing at the junction of the Vaal and Steinkopf Rivers, following the course of the Vaal River to where it meets the boundary line defined by Proclamation No. 67 of this date, as running "from the summit of the Platberg in a straight line in a north-westerly direction, along the north-east of Roelofsfontein, and cutting the Vaal and Hart Rivers to a point north of Boetsap;" from the point where it meets the last-mentioned boundary line, along that boundary line to the said point north of Boetsap; thence along the straight line defined by said Proclamation as running in a westerly direction between Nelsonsfontein and Koning, and further in a south-westerly direction along a line passing south of Maremani and north of Klipfontein, to a point in it where the shortest line from the principal or north-western source of the Steinkopf River meets it; thence to the said north-western source of the Steinkopf River, following its course to its junction with the Vaal River.

District of Pniel.

3. A line commencing at the junction of the Vaal River and Modder or Riet River, and following the course of the Vaal River to where it meets the boundary line defined by Proclamation No. 67 of this date, as running "from thesummit of the Platberg, in a straight line in a north-westerly direction along the north-east of Roelofsfontein, and cutting the Vaal and Hart Rivers, to a point north of Boetsap;" from the point where it meets the last-mentioned boundary in a straight line in a north-easterly direction to the summit of the Platberg; thence in a southerly direction in a straight line cutting the northern branch of the Modder or Riet River to David's Graf; thence to a point in southern branch of the Riet or Modder River, intersected by the boundary line from David's Graf to Ramah, from the said point in the southern branch of the Modder or Riet River, following the said River's course to its junction with the Vaal River.

District of Griqua Town.

4. A line commencing at the junction of the Vaal River and Modder or Riet River, and following the course of the Vaal River to its junction with the Steinkopf River; along the Steinkopf River to its principal or north-western source; thence along the shortest line to the point where such line meets the line mentioned above as the boundary of the district of Klipdrift, viz.: that running in a south-westerly direction along a line passing south of Marimani and north of Klipfontein, thence along the said last-mentioned to the northerly point of the Langeberg; thence in a straight line in a southerly direction to Kheis, near the Orange River; thence by the shortest line to the said Orange River, thence along the course of the said Orange River to the point on the same nearest to Ramah, thence to Ramah, and thence in a

northerly direction to the point on the southern branch of the Modder or Riet River, mentioned in the definition of the District of Pniel, thence following the course of the said Modder or Riet River to its junction with the Vaal River aforesaid.

5. And I do further declare that from and after the 27th day of October, 1871, the said districts shall be within and subject to the jurisdiction and authority of the several Courts of Resident Magistrates by this Proclamation constituted and established.

6. And to avoid misunderstanding in regard to the extent of the jurisdiction of the several Courts aforesaid, I hereby make it known that in all cases in which the boundary line of any of the aforesaid districts may intersect a place or farm or other location, such place, farm, or location shall be deemed to belong to that district in which the residence of the owner or occupier is situate.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, this 27th day of October, 1871.

HENRY BARKLY, Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor,

R. SOUTHEY, Colonial Secretary.

No. 69, 1871.

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BARKLY,

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof; and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS it is expedient to make provision for the due and effectual administration of justice within the territory of Griqualand West, defined in my Proclamation of this day's date: Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim, declare, and ordain as follows, that is to say:

2. There shall be within the territory of Griqualand West, pending the passing of a law for the annexation thereof to the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, a Court to be called the High Court of Griqualand, which shall be a Court of Record.

3. The said Court shall be held and presided over by a Judge, who shall be styled the Recorder of Griqualand, who shall hold office during good behaviour, pending such annexation as aforesaid, but may be suspended from his said office and the discharge of his duties by Her Majesty's High Commissioner, by order under his hand, in case of misconduct of such Recorder, provided that such High Commissioner shall immediately report, for the information of Her Majesty, through one of Her Principal Secretaries of State, the grounds and causes of such suspension.

Digitized by Google

4. The said Court shall have cognisance of all pleas and jurisdiction in all causes, whether civil or criminal, or mixed, arising within the said territory, with jurisdiction over Her Majesty's subjects and all other persons whatsoever residing or being within the said territory, in as full and ample a manner and to all intents and purposes as the Supreme Court of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope now has within the said Colony, and shall have full power, authority, and jurisdiction to apply, judge, and determine upon, and according to the laws now in force within the said Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, except in such cases as I, or my successors in office, as such High Commissioner as aforesaid, shall otherwise from time to time order by Proclamation to be duly published by me or my successors and recorded in the said Court, and all such other laws as shall at any time hereafter, pending such annexation as aforesaid, be made and established for the peace, good order and government of the said territory, by Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, with the advice and consent of Parliament or in Her or their Privy Council, or by me or my successors as such High Commissioner of Her Majesty, Her Heirs, or Successors.

5. The said Court shall have power to review the proceedings of all inferior Courts of Justice within the said territory in all such cases, and in like manner, as the Supreme Court of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope now has with regard to the proceedings of inferior Courts of Justice within the said Colony, and the pleadings and proceedings of the said High Court of Griqualand shall be carried on, and the sentences, decrees, judgments, and orders thereof pronounced and declared in open Court, and not otherwise; and the pleadings and proceedings of the said Court shall be in the English language, and in all criminal cases the witnesses against and for any accused person or persons shall deliver their evidence *viva voce*, and in open Court.

6. In any criminal case depending in the said Court, the trial of every accused person shall be before the said Recorder, and a jury of nine men, who shall concur in every verdict to be given on the trial of any such accused party, and every such verdict shall be delivered in open Court, by the mouth of the foreman of every such jury, and shall thereupon be recorded and read over to such jury before they are discharged from attendance on the said Court.

7. The said High Court of Griqualand shall have and use, as occasion may require, a seal bearing a device and impression of the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland within an exerque or label surrounding the same within this inscription—"The Seal of the High Court of Griqualand, South Africa," and the same shall be delivered to and kept in the custody of the Recorder for the time being; and in case of vacancy by death, sickness, absence from the said territory, or of suspension from the office of Recorder, the same shall be delivered over to and kept in the custody of such person as I shall appoint to act as and in the place of the said Recorder.

8. There shall, pending such annexation as aforesaid, be attached and belong to the said Court one officer to be styled the Registrar and Master of the said Court, and such other officers as shall be found to be necessary for

Digitized by Google

the carrying on the business thereof, who shall all hold office during Her Majesty's pleasure.

9. The said High Court of Griqualand may approve, enrol, and admit to practice as advocates or barristers therein, such persons as shall have been admitted as barristers in England or Ireland, or advocates in the Court of Session of Scotland, or to the degree of Doctor of Laws at the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, London, or Dublin, and have never been disbarred or otherwise disqualified, or who have been admitted as advocates of the Supreme Court of the Colonies of the Cape of Good Hope or Natal, respectively, and have not been disqualified: And may approve, enrol, and admit to practise as attorneys of the said Court any persons who, being attorneys or solicitors of any of the Courts of Record at Westminster or Dublin, or being proctor admitted to practise in any Ecclesiastical Court in England or Ireland, or being writers to the Signet in Scotland, or being attorneys of the Supreme Court of the Colonies of the Cape of Good Hope or Natal, have never been struck off the rolls of such Courts respectively, and are not under any order of suspension in any of such Courts, respectively; and further, if at any time the number of persons admitted for the time being to practise as barristers or advocates in the said Court shall be less than four, or the number of persons admitted to practise as attorneys or solicitors therein less than six, the said Court may further approve, enrol, and admit to practise, either as advocates or as attorneys, such fit and proper persons as it shall be satisfied ought to be admitted to practise as such, respectively, for the time being, so long as the number of persons admitted to practise such branches of practice, respectively, for the time being under any of these regulations shall be less than four or than six, respectively, but no such admission or enrolment of persons to practise under this regulation shall prevent the admission or enrolment of persons duly qualified for admission and enrolment under the provisions hereinbefore mentioned for the admission and enrolment of duly qualified practitioners in the several branches of practice, respectively; and on such admission or enrolment of any new practitioner duly qualified as aforesaid, if such admission shall have the effect of raising the number of persons admitted and enrolled in that branch of practice beyond the number of four or of six, respectively, then the person last admitted without such qualification as aforesaid, if any, under the last foregoing regulation, shall, on such new admission or enrolment, be disqualified from further practice in such branch of practice, unless and until the number of practitioners for the time being enrolled and admitted, shall fall short of the said numbers of four or six, respectively, in which case, if such person shall apply for re-admission and re-enrolment, preference shall be given to him for the time being over other applicants not duly qualified as aforesaid: Provided, further, that such person notwithstanding the disqualification from future practice, may nevertheless be permitted to bring to a final end any particular cause or matter in which he shall have been actually retained before such disqualification shall have arisen.

10. All persons approved, enrolled, or admitted either as advocates or barristers, or as attorneys in the said Court, shall nevertheless be subject to be

Digitized by Google

suspended or removed by the said High Court from their privileges and station therein, upon just cause shown or appearing to the said Court.

11. No person not so approved, admitted, and enrolled as aforesaid, shall be allowed to appear, plead, or act in the said Court for or on behalf of any suitors in the said Court.

12. The functions and office of barristers and advocates shall not be discharged in the said Court by the attorneys, solicitors, and proctors thereof, and the functions and office of attorneys, solicitors, and proctors shall not be discharged by such barristers or advocates: Provided, however, that in case there shall not be a sufficient number of barristers and advocates within the said territory competent and willing to act for the suitors of the said Court, the said Court may admit any of the attorneys, solicitors, or proctors thereof to appear and act as barristers and advocates during the time of such insufficiency only; and in case there shall not be a sufficient number of attorneys, solicitors, or proctors within the said territory, competent and willing to appear and act in that capacity for the suitors of the said Court, the said Court may admit any of such barristers or advocates to practise and act in the capacity of attorneys, solicitors, and proctors during the time of such insufficiency only.

13. There shall be a Sheriff for the said territory, to be appointed from time to time, pending such annexation as aforesaid, for such period of time as shall seem most convenient, who shall give such security for the due and faithful administration of his office as shall seem necessary and expedient, who shall by himself, or his sufficient deputies, to be by him appointed and duly authorised under his hand, and for whom he shall be responsible during his continuance in office, execute—and the said Sheriff is hereby authorised by himself, or his said deputies, to execute all the sentences, decrees, judgments, writs, summonses, rules, orders, warrants, commands, and processes of the said High Court of Griqualand, and shall make a return thereof, together with the manner of the execution thereof, to the said High Court, and shall receive and detain in custody or prison, under the order of the said Court, all such persons as shall be committed to the custody of the said Sheriff by the said Court.

14. Whenever the said Court shall direct or award any process against the said Sheriff, or award any process in any cause, matter, or thing wherein the said Sheriff, by reason of any good cause of challenge which would be allowed against any Sheriff in England, cannot or ought not by law execute the same, in every such case the High Court shall name and appoint some other fit person to execute and return the same, and the process shall be directed to the person so to be named for that purpose, and the cause of such special proceeding shall be registered and entered on the records of the said Courts respectively.

15. All civil suits or actions depending in the said Court shall be tried and decided by the Recorder alone and without a jury, but the rules contained in the Charter of Justice granted by His late Majesty King William the Fourth to his Colony of the Cape of Good Hope shall be followed in all respects as

Digitized by Google

nearly as may be with regard to appeals from the said High Court, which shall have the like powers and discretion with regard thereto as the Supreme Court of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope has in the like cases with regard to appeals therefrom, save, however, that all appeals from the said High Court shall be, in the first instance, to Her Majesty's High Commissioner; and if the appellant shall, in noting his appeal, so desire *and express such desire* in writing in his petition of appeal, such appeal shall be finally decided by such High Commissioner, who may reverse, correct, or vary the judgment or order appealed from as may be most just and expedient; but if such appellant shall express his desire that such appeal may be reserved for the opinion and decision of Her Majesty in Council, or if he shall be silent as to his desire in respect thereof, in either such case, Her Majesty's High Commissioner may, if he shall deem the matter of such appeal to be of such doubt or difficulty, and importance, as to make it expedient to reserve the same, reserve such appeal for the consideration and final determination of Her Majesty in Council, and shall, so soon as he shall have determined so to reserve the same, give notice to the parties to the said appeal, or their agents, of his intention so to reserve the same, and the same shall thereupon be prosecuted by the parties thereto according to law before Her said Majesty in Her Privy Council.

16. No judgment or sentence in any criminal case whereby any person shall be condemned to death shall be carried into execution until a report of all the proceedings upon any such trial shall have been laid before or transmitted to Her Majesty's High Commissioner by the said Recorder, nor until such High Commissioner shall have authorised and approved the execution of such sentence.

17. The said High Court may, from time to time, frame, constitute, and establish general rules or orders defining the time and place of holding the said Court, and the manner and form of proceedings to be observed therein, and the practice and pleadings upon all actions, suits, and other matters, both civil and criminal, the appointing of commissions to take bail and examine witnesses, the examination of witnesses *de bene esse*, and allowing the same as evidence, and all other matters and things with regard to which the power to frame rules and orders was given to the Supreme Court of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope by the charter hereinbefore mentioned of His late Majesty King William the Fourth.

18. All such rules shall forthwith be transmitted to Her Majesty's High Commissioner under the seal of the said Court for his approbation or disallowance, and until the promulgation of such rules and orders the general rules and orders in force in the Supreme Court of the Cape of Good Hope shall, with such changes as may be necessary, as nearly as may be, be deemed to be rules and orders of the said High Court, save that, until such promulgation, proceedings in criminal cases before the said Court shall be in the same form as the like proceedings before a Circuit Court of the Colony, and save also that all matters which are required by any of the said rules and orders of the Supreme Court of the Cape of Good Hope, to be done by the Clerk of

the Peace for Cape Town, may be done by the clerk to the public prosecutor of Griqualand or by any person by such Public Prosecutor thereto authorised, and all matters or things which are by the said rules directed to be done by the Clerks of the Peace for any district may be done by the Clerk to the Resident Magistrate of the district in or for which the same might or ought to be done.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, the 27th day of October, 1871.

HENRY BARKLY, Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor,

No. 70, 1871. R. SOUTHEY, Colonial Secretary.

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BARKLY,

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof; and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS I have, by my Proclamation of this day's date, No. 67, declared the Sovereignty of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, in and over the territory of Griqualand West, as defined by my said Proclamation, and it is expedient that certain rules and regulations should be established under which the search or digging for diamonds shall be carried on within the said territory: Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim, declare, and ordain as follows, that is to say: Wherever diamond diggings shall have been already opened or shall be opened within the territory of Griqualand, defined in my Proclamation of this day's date, No. 67, upon any land which has or shall, under or by virtue of the said Proclamation, become vested in Her Majesty as Crown land, and whenever diamonds shall be discovered upon any such Crown land in the said territory, it shall be lawful for the High Commissioner or any person by him duly authorised in that behalf to proclaim or give notice by public advertisement, that such area as shall in such proclamation or notice be defined or described, including the place where diamonds shall have been actually found, shall be deemed to be a diamond field, and it shall be lawful for any person thereto authorised by the said High Commissioner to mark out on the ground by such marks or beacons as shall seem most convenient the limits of such diamond field accordingly, in every case in which such field shall not have been already properly defined and marked out.

2. There shall be appointed to every diamond field so proclaimed, an officer, to be called an Inspector, whose duties and authorities shall be as follows, together with such other duties and authorities, if any, as shall be hereafter imposed and conferred on him:

Digitized by Google

3. To keep a register of claims within such field numbered consecutively, and to receive the license money, or royalty, or rent which may be payable for the right to search for diamonds within such claim.

4. To register with the number of each claim the name of the person or persons entitled for the time being to search for diamonds therein, and to see that such person or persons duly account for and pay the license money, or royalty, or rent payable for the time being in respect of such claim, and to recover the same as hereinafter is mentioned.

5. To mark out or cause to be marked out with pegs or otherwise, as according to the nature of the place may be most convenient, the boundaries of the several claims in the said fields, wherever the same shall not have been already properly marked out.

6. To entertain and determine in a summary manner, after view, if necessary, of the spot, all disputes as to the limits of claims and as to encroachments upon claims, and for this purpose he shall have authority to cause to be brought before him by summons or warrant any person within the limit of the said field, or not being more than five miles distant from the office for the time being of such Inspector, and also five miles from the spot concerning which the dispute may have arisen, who may be able to give evidence with regard to such dispute, for the purpose of giving such evidence, and may administer an oath to every witness whom he may think fit to examine in respect of any such dispute, and shall take down in writing the evidence of such witness; and any witness who shall knowingly give false evidence in any such matter before such Inspector shall be liable to the penalties of perjury.

7. To register every purchase or transfer of every claim in such field, and to see that every vendor or purchaser thereof duly account for and pay a registration fee of five shillings upon the registration of each such purchase, and to recover such sum of five shillings in manner hereinafter mentioned.

8. No transfer of any claim shall be allowed to be valid unless and until the same shall have been registered by the Inspector, and no such registration shall be made of any such transfer until all license money, or royalty, or rent, payable in respect thereof, and in arrear for the time being, shall have been paid, and also the said transfer fee of five shillings on the registration of such purchase.

9. No person shall, after the proclamation, or re-proclamation, as the case may be, under or by virtue hereof, of such diamond field, be entitled to work any claim, or search for diamonds therein at any time after the expiration of the period, if any, for which such person shall already be licensed so to work or search under or by virtue of any license held by him under any regulations or contract actually in force at the date of such proclamation, unless or until he shall have been duly registered by the Inspector as entitled thereto; and no such registration shall be made in the first instance, unless and until the instalment of license money, or royalty, or rent, to become payable on the same, for the period of time by which such license money, or royalty, or rent shall be made payable and limited shall have been paid in advance, and such license money, royalty, or rent shall thenceforward, from period to period,

Digitized by Google

become payable, in advance, at the end of every such period, in respect of the next succeeding period.

10. No person who shall be in arrear by the space of seven days after any payment of such license money, royalty, or rent, in respect of any claim, shall have become payable shall be entitled to continue to work the same or search for diamonds therein; and on such failure by the person registered as entitled to such claim for the space of seven days after any such payment shall have become payable to pay the same, the Inspector shall cancel the title of such persons upon the registry of claims: Provided, that on payment of all arrears due and reasonable excuse offered for the delay in payment, the same claim, if not previously granted to some other applicant therefor, as hereinafter is provided, may be granted anew to the person whose title thereto shall have been so cancelled as aforesaid.

11. Whenever any person having been entitled to any claim shall become disentitled by any means, save by having duly transferred his title to some other person duly registered accordingly, the Inspector may grant such claim to any other person applying and paying license therefor; and if more than one person shall have applied therefor, then the same shall be granted to the applicant who will pay the best price or bonus therefor, over and above the periodical license money, royalty, or rent, which price or bonus shall be ascertained by putting the said claim up for public competition, and the same shall be entered in the said registry and duly accounted for by the said Inspector, as well as hisother receipts.

12. It shall be lawful for every such Inspector, and he is hereby required, whenever he shall find any person working any claim or searching for diamonds therein who shall not be duly entitled so to do, to cause such person to be removed from such claim, and he shall cause the person entitled to the same, if any, on the registry, if such person shall desire it, to be placed in possession of such claim; and if no person be so entitled, then he shall keep the same vacant until some person shall become duly entitled to work the same and search for diamonds therein. And it shall further be lawful for such Inspector to seize any moveable property being within the said field which shall belong to any person who shall be for the time being in arrear in respect of any payment of license money, royalty, rent, or transfer fees as aforesaid, or other duty payable to such Inspector, and to detain such moveable property, or a reasonable amount thereof, sufficient to make good such arrear for the space of eight days, or until such arrear shall be paid; and if such arrear shall not be paid within such eight days, then to sell such moveable property by public competition for the best price that may be reasonably had for the same, and thereout to make good such arrear, together with the expenses of seizure and detention, and he shall hand the balance of the proceeds of such sale to the person entitled thereto or his agent, or hold the same for such person's account until applied for by such person or his lawful agent.

13. The Inspector or the Civil Commissioner of the district shall likewise be empowered to sue for any such license money, royalty, rent, or transfer fees as aforesaid in any competent Court.

Digitized by Google

14. In case more than twenty-five claims shall be duly registered in the names of and occupied by different persons or parties of persons and the persons engaged in searching for diamonds at the said field, shall have been called together in public meeting by the Inspector or some other person duly authorised by the High Commissioner or by the Civil Commissioner of the division in which such field shall be situate, to call such meeting, and shall thereat have passed rules for their mutual advantage, it shall be the duty of the Inspector or such other person so authorised as aforesaid to forward a copy of such rules to the Civil Commissioner of the division for his approval or disallowance; and the Inspector, unless and until such rules be disallowed, shall, in so far as the same shall not conflict with substantial justice or with the rules herein imperatively laid down, carry into effect, so far as may be, such rules, which are hereby declared to be, for the time being, valid as bye-laws and binding, unless disallowed, upon all residents at such field, except in so far as the same may conflict with reason and justice; and such rules may delegate to any body of persons not less than three, to be nominated at such meeting, or in such manner as shall at such meeting be determined, the power to frame bye-laws for the regulation and good order of such field and the execution, with the assistance of the Inspector, of such bye-laws.

15. In every case in which, at the date of such proclamation or re-proclamation, by virtue hereof, of any diamond field as a public diamond field, there shall have been already established in working order a set of rules and regulations for the order and government of such field, the Inspector shall, as soon as may be, forward a copy of such rules to the Civil Commissioner of the division, in like manner as if such rules had been framed by a meeting duly called under the provisions hereof, and, in the meantime, until any such rules shall be disallowed, the same shall, in so far as they shall not conflict with substantial justice or with the rules herein imperatively laid down, be deemed valid, in like manner as if the same were so framed, as aforesaid, at a meeting duly called under the provisions hereof. In either case, whether such rules shall have been passed before such proclamation or re-proclamation as aforesaid, or under the provisions hereof, such rules may from time to time be altered or amended by public meeting duly called, and the same shall, on their allowance by the Civil Commissioner of the division, become valid and binding; but until the same shall have been allowed, and such allowance notified to the Inspector by such Civil Commissioner, the rules already in force, so far as the same shall have been in force and not disallowed, shall be deemed to be valid.

16. Unless any such rule passed or in force in manner aforesaid under any of the provisions next foregoing shall otherwise determine every claim which the person registered as entitled thereto shall after such registration have left for eight days without *bonâ fide* working, the same shall be held to be forfeited, and the person so registered as aforesaid shall be thereupon deemed to have become disentitled thereto.

17. Every person when registering himself, or applying to be registered as entitled to a claim, whether in the first instance, or by purchase, or transfer,

Digitized by Google

shall state to the Inspector the number of hands which he intends to employ in the working of any such claim, which number shall be entered on the registry with the number of the claim and the name of the person registered, and if such person shall be found to employ or to have employed at any time in working his said claim more hands than the number for which he shall be registered he shall be bound to pay for every such offence a sum of five pounds, and in default of such payment on demand, his claim shall be forfeited, and he shall be deemed to have become disentitled thereto.

18. Every person who shall be so registered as aforesaid as entitled to employ a certain number of hands on any claim may, if he shall be desirous to increase the number of the hands which he desires to employ, be registered for such larger number as he shall desire to employ, by notifying such desire to the Inspector and paying the additional license money, royalty, or rent payable in respect of such larger number, which license money, royalty, or rent shall be payable in respect of the entire period of time for which any license money is payable, within any part whereof such larger number of hands shall be employed.

19. Unless or until it shall have been or shall be otherwise determined by any such rule or regulation made and passed, or to be made and passed, in manner aforesaid, the superficial dimensions of each claim shall be thirty feet by thirty feet, or nine hundred square feet in all; but where the nature of the ground shall render it undesirable that the claim shall be thirty feet by thirty feet, the total of nine hundred square feet may be otherwise laid out, and by increasing one dimension with a proportional diminution of the other.

20. The license money, royalty, or rent payable in respect of each claim shall be, where the same shall be worked by not more than three persons, five shillings per month. Where the same shall not be worked by more than six persons, ten shillings per month. For every additional hand or person employed, two shillings per month.

21. Hands or persons shall be deemed to be employed in working a claim who shall be engaged in digging, picking, or shovelling with any implement, or drawing or carrying on any vehicle and by any means the soil, gravel, or rock raised from the claim.

22. The Inspector shall be bound to account, in such manner and form as shall be determined, to the Civil Commissioner of the district in which the field is situate, for all sums of money received by him as such Inspector, or which but for his default ought to have been received by him.

23. Whenever diamond diggings shall have been already opened or shall be opened within the said territory, and whenever diamonds shall be discovered therein upon any lands, the property of any private person, the title to which lands is or shall be subject, in the original grant thereof, to a reservation of the right to precious stones or minerals, the regulations hereby declared and made as to Crown lands shall be held equally to apply to such lands the property of such private person, save that no regulation passed or to be passed by any public meeting of miners as aforesaid, limiting the amount of compensation to be paid to the owner of such property for any infringement on his rights of

Digitized by Google

property not included in the provisions hereinafter contained for arbitration and assessment, shall be valid, unless expressly assented to by such owner, either in person or through his lawful attorney thereto authorised.

24. In every case of any such private property, as aforesaid, the provisions following shall be observed.

25. It shall be lawful for the High Commissioner to agree with such private person as to the terms on which such diamond diggings may be worked and such diamonds sought.

26. If such private person shall not agree with Her Majesty's High Commissioner as to the terms on which the diamond diggings thereon may be worked and the diamonds therein sought for, it shall be lawful for such High Commissioner to enter or cause entry to be made upon such lands and diggings, and to possess the mines and the diamonds therein on behalf of Her Majesty, and to give or cause to be given to the said proprietor forthwith notice of such entry and to pay such reasonable compensation for all injury done to the surface and soil of the said lands by reason of such diamond diggings and such mining and search for diamonds, and the amount of such damage as shall be agreed on between the said proprietor and the said High Commissioner, and if no agreement be arrived at between them within three months of such notice, then as shall be determined by arbitrators, one to be chosen by or on behalf of the said proprietor, and one by or on behalf of the said High Commissioner, who, before proceeding to arbitration, shall name an umpire, whose award, in case the arbitrators shall differ on any matter subject to their arbitration, shall be final.

27. In case the proprietor or the said High Commissioner shall not within three months after such notice as aforesaid, name an arbitrator, then the arbitrator named within the said three months by the other party shall alone proceed to arbitrate and award on the amount of damages to be awarded in respect of the injury done to such property by such diamond diggings and such mining and search for diamonds, but the value of the diamonds shall in nowise be taken into account in awarding such compensation as aforesaid.

28. If the proprietor shall within such three months signify his desire, instead of accepting compensation for the damage done to his said lands as aforesaid, to sell the property in the said lands out and out, then the High Commissioner shall buy the same, and if the price shall not be agreed on within the said three months, then the arbitrators shall, in lieu of determining on the amount of compensation to be paid, determine on the price to be paid for the lands so to be sold, and all the other conditions of such arbitration shall be as hereinbefore set forth, and the value of the diamonds shall not be taken in anywise into consideration in estimating the value of the said lands.

29. Whenever diamond diggings shall have been already opened, or shall be opened within the said territory, to the extent hereinafter defined upon such lands as hereinafter mentioned, and whenever diamonds shall be discovered within the said territory, upon any lands the property of any private person, the title to which land is not subject to any reservation of precious stones or minerals, and such private person shall desire to establish diamond diggings

Digitized by Google

on such property, and shall have sold, or let, or given license to work mining or digging claims on such property, exceeding in number twenty-four such claims, or to search for diamonds in such property, over a surface, or surfaces, to the extent of twenty thousand square feet in all, or upwards, such claims or licenses in each case to be worked by any number of persons exceeding seventy in all; or wherever in the vicinity of any claims worked on such private property as aforesaid, a population shall be settled for the time being of upwards of one hundred persons, the place where such claims or such licenses shall be worked or shall lie to be worked shall be deemed to be a public diamond field, and may be proclaimed and defined as such in like manner as if the same were on Crown land. In every such case the regulations hereinbefore contained relating to the duties of Inspector and the carrying out and enforcing regulations for the order and good government of such fields shall be deemed to apply in like manner as if the same were situate on Crown lands, save that the amount of license money, rent, or royalty to be paid for each claim shall be fixed by the owner of such property as aforesaid whereon such diamond field shall be situate, not being less upon each claim of nine hundred square feet, or, in proportion to the superficial extent of the claim, not being less than would be leviable on the same extent if each claim were nine hundred square feet in dimension than the amount of monthly license duty, royalty, or rent hereinbefore provided in respect of claims upon Crown lands, and the license moneys, royalties, or rents payable by the miners or diggers entitled to work any claim therein shall be accounted for monthly by the Civil Commissioner of the division to the owner of the property whereon such diamond field is situate; and the balance of such license moneys, royalties, or rents, after deducting therefrom the proportion of ten pounds for every hundred pounds thereof, or in the like proportion at the least, and such further sum, if any, as may be necessary to defray the public expenditure in respect of the establishment necessary for the maintenance of order and good government at such diamond field, shall be paid to such owner of such property as aforesaid whereon such diamond field shall be situate: Provided, also, that no rules or regulations passed or made or to be passed or made by any such public meeting of miners as aforesaid shall be valid which shall affect the rights of such proprietor or define the compensation which shall be made to him for interference with any of his rights as such proprietor, without his express concurrence in such rules either in person or through his lawful attorney thereto authorised.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, this 27th day of October, 1871.

HENRY BARKLY, Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor,

R. SOUTHEY, Colonial Secretary.

No. 71, 1871.

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BARKLY,

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof; and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS I have proclaimed the Sovereignty of Her Britannic Majesty, Queen Victoria, over the people and territory of Griqualand West, as defined in my Proclamation of even date herewith: And whereas doubts may be entertained by certain of the inhabitants of the said territory, especially those occupying lands in the portions thereof the Sovereignty over which has been heretofore in dispute between the Chief Waterboer and the Governments of the Orange Free State and South African Republic, as to the intentions of Her said Majesty in extending Her Sovereignty over the same, and divers evil-minded persons may unsettle the minds of the said inhabitants by setting forth and circulating reports as to the intentions of Her said Majesty and Her Government with regard to the titles of the said inhabitants to the lands now held by them, respectively, within the said territory; and I have, therefore, resolved thus publicly to notify such intentions, and to quiet the apprehensions of such inhabitants upon the said subject: Now, therefore, I do hereby proclaim, declare, and make known that Her said Majesty has no intention nor will to invalidate or prejudicially to affect or injure in any way the private rights or titles to the possession of any property, movable or immovable, *bonâ fide* acquired, of any individual inhabitant of the said territory, whether born a subject of Her said Majesty or not, but rather, by introducing a settled government into the said territory, to confirm such rights and quiet such possession: And to this end I hereby make known that it is my desire that all persons claiming title or right of possession or any other right in any lands within the said territory should, as soon as may be, send to the Civil Commissioners of the district in which such lands may be situate a statement in writing of the particulars of his said claim, and the nature of the right claimed by him, and under what title such claim is made, in order to the grant and confirmation by formal and authentic documentary evidence, under the sanction of Her Majesty's Government, of such title and rights of possession as may now be vested in such inhabitants respectively, according to the jurisdiction under which the same are, or may be, or may have been, now or heretofore, held respectively, it being the will and pleasure of her said Majesty that all persons may fully and peacefully enjoy their possessions under the sanction of good and just laws, and that public record may be made of the rights and titles of such persons, in order to preserve clear evidence of such rights and titles, and to secure the same to the said inhabitants and those to whom they may hereafter lawfully transfer the same.

2. And I do further proclaim, declare, and make known that all such existing titles of private persons will be duly respected and considered valid and confirmed by Her Majesty's Government, as would under the laws of

Digitized by Google

the State or Government under which the said private persons may have heretofore been living *de facto* have been considered valid by such State or Government, notwithstanding that the title thereto may not have originally been granted by Her said Majesty or Her predecessors, or by me or by my predecessors in office as Governors of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope or as Her said Majesty's High Commissioners, or by the paramount Chief for the time being of Griqualand West with the approbation of his Council or Raad: Provided, however, that as to all titles claimed to be held by grant or other document from the Government of the Orange Free State, or the Government of the South African Republic, in the said territory, made since the first day of January, 1870, the question of confirmation or cancellation of such pretended titles shall be, and the same is hereby reserved; and each such case shall, after investigation, be dealt with on its own individual merits by Her Majesty's High Commissioner, and either cancelled or confirmed absolutely, or upon such conditions as, in each case, may to him seem just and right.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, this 27th day of October, 1871.

HENRY BARKLY, Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor,

R. SOUTHEY, Colonial Secretary.

No. 72, 1871.

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BARKLY,

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof; and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS it may be necessary that various Acts of State should be done from time to time in the Territory of Griqualand West, in my absence therefrom, and before my pleasure as to the said Acts can be known there:

2. Now I have thought fit to appoint, constitute, and commission JOHN CAMPBELL, of Klipdrift, JAMES HENRY BOWKER, of King William's Town, and JOHN CYPRIAN THOMPSON, of Graham's Town, and of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister-at-Law, to act as Commissioners for and under me, and on my behalf as High Commissioner, during pleasure, and I hereby command all Her Majesty's loving subjects in the said Territories of Griqualand West to be aiding and assisting the said Commissioners in all such acts as they shall do in conformity with my said Commission.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, this 27th day of October, 1871.

HENRY BARKLY, Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor,

No. 73, 1871. R. SOUTHEY, Colonial Secretary.

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX II.

THE FREE STATE ORDINANCE FOR ADMINISTERING AFFAIRS UPON THE DIAMOND FIELDS.

ORDINANCE No. 3, 1871.

Prescribing how shall be dealt in time to come with Farms in grounds wherein Precious Stones and Metals may be discovered, situated within the Boundaries of the Orange Free State.

WHEREAS precious stones have been discovered from time to time within the territory of the Orange Free State, and whereas there are reasons for believing that precious stones and metals will hereafter be discovered in this State, on farms or grounds wherein they have not yet been found, and that larger quantities will be discovered, on farms where they have already been found, and whereas an imperative necessity exists, in order to the prevention of irregularities and violence, for framing regulations in regard to such farms or grounds situated within the limits of the Orange Free State, where precious stone or metals have already been, or shall be hereafter found as above mentioned; therefore the Volksraad hereby resolves as follows, to wit:—

Art. 1.—That the owner or occupier of a farm or piece of ground, on which precious stones or metals may be discovered, in case such owner desires to open diggings on his farm, shall immediately make known such discovery to the Landdrost of the district, within whose jurisdiction the farm is situated.

Art. 2.—That said Landdrost on so receiving information from the owner or occupier of ground, as mentioned in Article 1, or in any other manner, regarding the discovery of precious stones or metals, shall immediately make known the same by written report to His Honour the State President.

Art. 3.—That His Honour the State President shall, as early as possible, after obtaining information regarding the discovery of precious stones or metals as in Article 2 aforesaid, depute to the place in question for and on account of Government, a suitable person resident in the neighbourhood of the place where such discovery has been made, who shall forward as early as possible a written report of the facts to His Honour the State President.

Art. 4.—His Honour the State President is by this Ordinance empowered, after the receipt of such report as stated in the foregoing Article, with advice and consent of the Executive Council, to determine whether the interests of the country require that the land or fixed property on which precious stones

Digitized by Google

or metals shall be found, as aforesaid, shall, on payment of the value, and with consent of the owner, be taken over by purchase; or whether the Government of Orange Free State shall merely assume superintendence over the diggings to be established there. The value of the land in question shall be fixed at £1 sterling per morgen, or more, for the mere ground, that is exclusive of improvements made thereon, which latter shall be appraised by three valuators, two of whom to be appointed by the State President, and one by the owner of the ground, such valuation not being subject to any higher appeal.

Art. 5.—In the event of the State President and Executive Council resolving, by virtue of the foregoing Article, to buy in from the owner, on account of Government, the ground in question, the owner shall, on payment of its value, transfer the same to the Government of Orange Free State, but without the levy of transfer dues, stamp duties, or fees of office, and the same shall then be proclaimed in the *Government Gazette* by the State President as the property of Government.

Art. 6.—His Honour the President, with the Executive Council, is hereby empowered on behalf of Government to open to the public for digging such land as shall have been taken over by purchase for Government as aforesaid, as well as such land as the owner by Art. 4 may have refused to sell, under such regulations as by this Ordinance are made, or hereafter may be made, and the State President shall give public notice thereof.

Art. 7.—In the event of the State President and Executive Council resolving to open any property for digging, a Government functionary shall immediately be placed there, to be styled the "Government Inspector," on whom shall be conferred the authority of a "Justice of the Peace," by virtue of this Ordinance, also defined by Ord. No. 2—1870. The salary of the Government Inspector shall be £300 per annum, besides £100 for travelling expenses and other requisites, being £400 in all, more or less. The Government Inspector shall have general control over such property, and shall under authority of the President and Executive Council act in the leasing out of digging claims, each claim not to exceed thirty feet square, not to exceed a monthly license of ten shillings, and under the following conditions, to wit:

a. That the person or persons making application to the Government Inspector for permission to dig, if not an inhabitant of Orange Free State, shall sign a written promise, in presence of the Government Inspector, to obey the laws of the country before being allowed to search for precious stones or metals.

b. That the licenses shall be paid monthly in advance to the Government Inspector on behalf of Government.

c. That all other Government licenses and taxes shall be paid every three months in advance to the Government Inspector, on behalf of Government.

d. That the Government Inspector shall open and keep a Register, in which the name in full and last residence of the person who applies for permission to dig, shall be entered, before such permission be granted.

Digitized by Google

e. That the Government Inspector, acting on behalf of Government, shall have the right to give notice to, and, if requisite, to compel one or more of the diggers to quit any digging of which he has the oversight, whenever he judges the same to be necessary for the public benefit and safety.

f. That each digger must bind himself to render gratuitous assistance to the Government Inspector, when his assistance may be required, in order to suppress violence or tumult, and to arrest rioters or other criminals, and to hand them over to the judicial authority.

g. That no digging claim shall be made over by one digger to another without the permission of the Government Inspector.

h. That every digger shall be bound and obliged to sign and conform to the above recited regulations, as likewise such farther regulations as may be hereafter established by the authorities of the Orange Free State in regard to the search for diamonds.

Art. 8.—In cases of urgent necessity the Government Inspector shall have the right temporarily to appoint in his room a member of the Committee of Management, mentioned in the following article, provided he give immediate notice thereof to the State President, by whom farther provisions shall be made, if requisite.

Art. 9.—On every farm where diggings are opened, a Committee of Management shall be constituted, consisting of six members, of which the Government Inspector or his deputy shall be the *ex officio* Chairman: the members of the Committee of Management shall be chosen from, and by diggers on the spot: four members of the Committee of Management shall form a quorum; the Chairman shall, where the votes are even, have a casting vote.

Art. 10.—The Committee of Management shall have power to frame such regulations as may be found necessary for the good order, local circumstances, and social management of the diggings; but will be required to give immediate notice thereof to the State President; and they will be subject to the approval of the Executive Council.

Art. 11.—If no Committee of Management, as prescribed by Article 9, can be constituted, or in the event of such Committee of Management ceasing to exist, or becoming disqualified, the Government Inspector shall have the full power to carry out the duties imposed by this Ordinance on the Committee of Management.

Art. 12.—The members of the Committee of Management shall not have the right to demand remuneration for their services.

Art. 13.—On departure, resignation, decease, severe illness, or absence of one or more of the members of the Committee of Management, the vacancies may be filled up by the diggers on the spot electing other members from their own number.

Art. 14.—That every Government Inspector shall give security, before assuming his duties, for his financial management, under this Ordinance, to the satisfaction of the Executive Council, in the sum of £500, and shall regularly, on or before the fifth day of each month, render an account to the Landdrost of his District of his pecuniary administration during the preceding

Digitized by Google

month, and shall pay over the money to that officer, and shall be likewise bound to forward a monthly written report to His Honour the State President of his proceedings and of the general state of affairs at the diggings.

Art. 15.—That the Executive Council shall have the right, if such be absolutely required for the public safety, to appoint a body of constables, not exceeding six at each Government or private diggings, for the assistance and support of the Government Inspector and Committee of Management; but in times of danger the State President and Executive Council may render more extensive assistance to the Government Inspector.

Art. 16.—In the event of His Honour the State President and Executive Council deciding, by virtue of Article 4 of this Ordinance, that the Government will not take over, on compensation, the farms where precious stones and metals are discovered, the Government shall still permit digging on such farms, under Government supervision; and, farther, under such regulations as already have been, or hereafter may be made regarding farms taken over by Government on compensation.

Art. 17.—On farms on which diggings are established, and coming under the head of those mentioned in the preceding article, the Government Inspectors shall pay over the half of the pecuniary proceeds of all licenses to the owners of those farms, or their lawful agents, on receipt, and the other half shall, by those officers, be brought to account, as prescribed by Article 14 of this Ordinance, in order to defray the expenses of Government, connected with keeping up an oversight over the diggings.

Art. 18.—In the event of diggings being established on separate farms, which are, however, not more than two hours distance from each other, one and the same Government Inspector shall be able to exercise jurisdiction over such farms.

Art. 19.—That His Honour the President and Executive Council are charged with the framing of such regulations for the diggings regarding wood, water, and grazing of live stock, as likewise for buildings and lands, as they shall deem requisite; and the owners of farms, on which such diggings exist, shall be required to conform to such regulations.

Art. 20.—That Article 1 of this Ordinance shall not apply to farms on which diggings have already been opened.

Art. 21.—This Ordinance shall have the force of law after publication.

Thus done and established this 2nd day of June, 1871.

J. Z. DE VILLIERS, Secretary. G. P. VISSER, Chairman.

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX III.

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE DORSTFONTEIN (DUTOITSPAN) DIGGINGS.

THE following are the Rules and Regulations framed and agreed upon between Martin Lilienfield and Henry Webb, acting on behalf of the proprietors of Dorstfontein, and the following gentlemen, deputed by a General Public Meeting of diggers at Dorstfontein, on the 15th day of May, 1871, for that purpose, viz.'—James Buchanan, Finlayson, Barend Woest, Joachim J. Rothman, William Devine, William Stratford Wright, as representing such general public :—

1. The Committee shall consist of five members.

2. That from and after the 15th May, 1871, a fee of ten shillings and sixpence sterling per month for claims shall be payable by each digger, in advance, to the proprietors or their agents, at their office, Dorstfontein, save and excepting those who hold briefs or permits prior to the 15th April, 1871, who can satisfy the proprietors and Committee that such are *bonâ fide* permits, to be exhibited within one week.

3. All claims shall be surveyed and measured off by the proprietors, and the Committee shall be entitled to impose a fine, not exceeding five pounds sterling, upon any one removing or altering any beacon after the same has been finally measured and adjusted.

4. No one shall be allowed to throw any ground, dirt, or filth on his neighbour's claim. All loose ground shall be kept by the owner on his own claim. The Committee shall have the power of imposing a fine, not exceeding two pounds sterling, in case of any infringement of this rule.

5. Any person or persons, with or without a license, found working any claim other than his own, or without consent of the owner, shall be subjected to a fine not exceeding five pounds sterling.

6. Any person or digger finding a diamond on the claim of another person, and not returning the same to the owner of the claim, shall be considered as a thief, and be expelled the diggings.

7. The spot or locality for burial of carcases and other filth shall be selected and pointed out by the Committee.

8. No person or persons shall be entitled to select or work any claim without having first signed and submitted to the Diggers' Rules and Regulations,

Digitized by Google

which the Committee shall at all times have the power of enforcing and making operative.

9. The Committee and proprietors shall have the right conjointly to amend or add to these Regulations, and such amendments or additions shall at all times be taken to be as effectual as if inserted herein.

10. Any member of the Committee absenting himself for fourteen days or more, without intimation or notice to the other members, shall, *ipso facto*, cease to be a member of the Committee.

11. Every digger shall be compelled to assist the Committee in giving effect to, and support in, the execution of their judgments, subject to a penalty of one pound sterling in case of non-compliance.

12. Every digger shall pay the sum of one shilling to the Committee on the signing of these Rules.

13. No person shall be entitled, under the new license, to have more than two claims at one time.

14. Any claim or claims having been abandoned for eight or more successive days, shall be liable to be selected and taken possession of by any person or persons taking out a license for the same—the claims of members of Committee being specially exempt from such a rule.

15. Each licensed digger shall be entitled to pasturage on the farm Dorstfontein for six sheep and one span of oxen, at the following rate, viz. :—For six sheep, the sum of threepence sterling per month; and for each ox the sum of threepence sterling per month. Such sheep and oxen to be the *bonâ fide* property of the license-holder, and such privilege being in no way transferable.

16. The proprietors shall, as soon as the same becomes practicable, sink six wells, which they will, on completion, place at the disposal of the Committee for the benefit of the diggers, who shall pay the proprietors the sum of one shilling sterling each per month, from the 15th day of May, 1871.

17. The Committee and proprietors shall select a person or persons competent thereto, to regulate the formation of streets and squares, and the former are empowered to enforce rules necessary for the accomplishment of such purposes.

18. All disputes and differences between the diggers and proprietors under these Rules shall be submitted to the arbitration of the Committee, whose decision will be binding and final.

19. Any person signing these Rules and Regulations, and having been fined by the Committee for any misdemeanour or infringement, or having been ordered to comply with any order or judgment, shall be bound to pay such fine or fulfil such order or judgment; and in case of failure so to do, submits, by signing these Rules, to such process as shall be by the said Committee directed, for the carrying out of their judgment.

20. The proprietors engage at the end of each month to pay over to the Committee as custodians for the diggers—to enable the latter to carry out sanitary measures, pay a permanent secretary, and uphold the Committee—ten pounds sterling upon every one hundred pounds sterling, of all revenue collected by them from "Dorstfontein Diggings."

Digitized by Google

21. Monthly permits of occupation for establishing places of business other than those already established under permission, will be granted by the proprietors on terms which can be ascertained on application at their office. Parties holding licenses or permission prior to the 15th of May, 1871, shall continue to hold such licenses upon the same terms as hitherto, and all persons holding shop licenses shall be subject to the following rules, viz.:—(1.) No servant to have drink unless he have a written permission from his master. (2.) No gambling to be permitted on the premises. (3.) No drink to be sold on Sundays, or during the hours between ten P.M. and five A.M. on week days.

22. Any infringement of the above rules shall subject the party so infringing to a penalty or fine of not less than £1 (one pound sterling), and not more than £5 (five pounds sterling).

23. It is strictly forbidden to any one to purchase a diamond or diamonds from any servant, black or white, without a certificate from such servant's master or mistress, under a penalty of five pounds sterling, and expulsion from the Camp at the discretion of the Committee.

24. All transfers of claims or portions thereof shall be registered in the proprietor's books, for which the person applying for such transfer shall pay a fee of sixpence sterling.

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX IV.

THE SECOND NEW RUSH RIOTS.

(From *The Diamond News*, July 20, 1872.)

LYNCHING AND TENT BURNING—ARREST OF DIGGERS—THEIR RELEASE DEMANDED—COLLISION WITH THE POLICE—THE COMMISSIONERS MEET THE DIGGERS.

On Tuesday evening, the 16th inst., a large concourse of diggers, irritated by the increased number of thefts of diamonds, in consequence of the inducements held out to native servants by unprincipled men—principally connected with low canteens—visited several parts of the camp (New Rush) for the expressed purpose of administering lynch law. They proceeded, in the first place, to a tent belonging to some Indian coolies, who were strongly suspected of being in league with certain Kaffir servants as dishonest as themselves. The tent-lines were speedily loosened, and the property set on fire and completely destroyed, not, however, before at least one of the coolies had been secured. A search for diamonds was made, and the result showed that the suspicions of the diggers were not altogether groundless. What number of diamonds were found, or whether they were found in the tent or about the person of the coolie, we have not been able to ascertain; but the conclusion arrived at was that the man had obtained them by dishonest means, and should be punished accordingly. He was then stripped, flogged, and ignominiously kicked out of the camp, amid the scoffing of the multitude.

On Wednesday evening, several thousand diggers, preceded by an amateur band, marched from the direction of the kopje to a certain canteen on the south side of the camp. Here they halted, hurrahed, and encircled the property. No one was in charge of it, the barman having been arrested by the police that afternoon on a charge of buying diamonds from native thieves, and the owner (Captain Stephenson) being absent. Not many minutes elapsed before the tent was in flames. Bottles of French brandy, wines, and bitters were ruthlessly smashed, casks were stove in, and every article of the least value destroyed. The crowd could not have numbered less than four thousand, and it was momentarily increasing. Every particle of wood on the premises was consigned to the flames, and, with the aid of so large a quantity of spirits, caused an immense conflagration. Having reduced this property to ashes, they answered to the invitation, "This way, diggers." The band, such as it

Digitized by Google

was, headed the mob, playing a march of some sort, but the shouting was so great that it was almost impossible to hear it. Arrived at a tent situate within a hundred yards of the kopje (south side), there was a general "hurrah," and then the canteen was surrounded by the crowd—now increased to probably about five thousand. The tent-lines were cut, and the tent getting somewhat askew, when a discussion took place as to whether the proprietor had been in the habit of buying diamonds or not. Some were for applying the firebrand at once, others were apparently opposed to it. After some little delay, up came about fifteen of the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police (armed). "Stand back, or we'll fire on you," or words to that effect, cleared the entrance to the tent. A desultory conversation ensued, in which the proprietor of the property took part; after which there was a general verdict of "No proof." The larger portion of the crowd then left, while not a few remained behind to fraternise with the police. Presently it was announced that another property was burning, and sure enough while the police were endeavouring to save one tent the diggers were burning another. This turned out to be a butchery down West. Whose property it was, or why it was burnt, we know not. Certain it is, that a frame canvas building, well stocked with meat ready for sale next morning, was destroyed. It is reported that it has been since ascertained that the owner of the butchery was perfectly innocent of the crime imputed to him; and if this be so, it is hard indeed that he should have been made to suffer ruin. Another tent was visited by the mob, but no sooner was it surrounded than a voice exclaimed, "Save the female." Upon inquiry it was found that a poor woman and a little child were inside the tent much terrified, and this fact doubtless influenced the principal actors in the work of destruction to be merciful and spare the building and stock. Whilst this place was burning, Inspector Gilfillan arrived, and endeavoured to exert his influence in the interest of order, and if possible prevent further destruction of property, when he was seized, lifted upon the shoulders of some sturdy digger, and threatened with closer proximity to the flames than appeared to be pleasant. After this undignified treatment the gallant officer retired.

It was somewhere about this time that a proposition emanated from one in the crowd to visit Dutoitspan. The idea soon spread, and amidst the cheers which went forth every few minutes, "Dutoitspan" could be distinctly heard. A start was soon effected, and in passing down Main Street and along Dutoitspan road, the crowd presented a dense living mass, many persons being unwillingly carried along with the stream. It was not an unruly mob, but an orderly crowd, moving steadily forward with a fixed purpose. When the outskirts of the camp had been reached, twelve or fifteen of the mounted police, in charge of Sergeant McCarter, put in an appearance, and this evidently had the effect of deterring the mob from carrying out their original programme. It was "too late to go to Dutoitspan!" and so movement was made in an opposite direction, diagonal course being taken to the Market-square. Here there was any amount of cheering, after which the crowd dispersed.

In consequence of the riots that took place on Wednesday evening, Civil Commissioner Giddy invited a considerable number of influential diggers to

Digitized by Google

meet in the Court-house at three o'clock on Thursday afternoon, including Mr. Coleman, the chairman, and the members of the "Diggers' Committee." The doors were open, but the gathering may be characterized as more influential than numerous, when compared with the mass meetings that take place on the fields. Among those present were Mr. Knight, M.L.A., Dr. Dyer, Mr. Paton, Mr. Palgrave, Captain Wallace, and Mr. De Jongh.

Mr. Giddy opened the proceedings by a very judicious speech, in which he appealed to those present to declare themselves in favour of order, and to discourage the lawless course adopted by those who resorted to violence, instead of using the ordinary constitutional means for obtaining the redress of any public grievances. The tone of the speech was firm, and was received with signs of approval.

None of the gentlemen present appeared to have prepared themselves for taking decisive action, and it was some time before the general feeling of the meeting was condensed and put into the shape of resolutions.

Mr. Atkins stood out as the representative of the opposition, and although not declaring himself in favour of the action taken in the tent-burning riots, did not seem to concur fully in the expressions of disapprobation that fell from all, or nearly all, the other speakers.

Messrs. Evans, Ward, Knight, Paton, Reed, Dyer, De Jongh, and Wallace were among those who took a prominent part in the proceedings. Mr. Craven made an effective speech against the lawless and riotous course that had been adopted, and pointed out that it was only for any man having a spite against another, to use such occasions for reeking his revenge or malice, under pretence of attempting to redress a public grievance.

On the suggestion of Mr. Coleman, the petition that had been forwarded to His Excellency by the Diggers' Committee, on the prevalence of diamond stealing, was read by the Civil Commissioner.

The following resolutions were carried unanimously.

Proposed by Dr. Dyer, seconded by Mr. de Jongh, "That the occurrences like that of last night are much to be regretted, as the innocent are often likely to suffer if such courses are continued."

Proposed by Mr. Knight, M.L.A., seconded by Captain Wallace, "That this meeting, in view of the recent unlawful proceedings in the Camp of New Rush, calculated so seriously to alarm the residents, is of opinion that it is the duty of the people to tender their services to the Resident Magistrate, to be applied in such manner as he may deem most expedient, to repress the disorderly conduct now prevailing, and preserve the public peace."

Mr. Giddy then called on those present, to enrol themselves as special constables in a book provided for the purpose.

The oath written in the book was as follows:—"We, the undersigned, do declare that we will truly and faithfully, to the best of our ability, without fear, favour, or affection, perform the duties of Special Constables, in the district of Pniel, for the suppression of violence and the preservation of peace, So help us God." This oath was signed by—W. Knight, W. J. Coleman, Guy Reed, J. E. Dyer, John Edward Nelson, James Hall, W. P. Craven, John Rhind, M.D.,

Harry S. Caldecott, Charles S. Parsons, W. H. Beddy, J. F. Standford, W. C. Ashwell, Edward Bury, George King, R. Cawood, G. K. Jackson, George J. Lee, Jesse Smith, Walter George Compton, G. T. Bean, James Hodges, K. Tucker, J. B. Turner, J. Forbes, C. F. Blakeway, P. Serle, George Paton, J.P., L. Grussendorf, E. W. Meek, T. Ybanes, W. Hillmore, G. H. Barber, J.P., R. G. Wallace, J.P., L. J. Bolleston, J.P., W. T. Graham, Henry Ogilvie, J.P., S. A. Phillips, G. M. Cole, C. Evans, A. F. McIntosh, John Venn E. Phillips, William Rhind, T. Filmer, R. Lingen Burton, John Fry, J.P.

After a vote of thanks to the chair, the business of the meeting was closed.

During the afternoon of the same day, several arrests were made by the police. The names of those taken into custody upon suspicion of being concerned in the proceedings of the preceding night, were Montague, Blaine, Greathead and Siebert, all diggers of Colesberg Kopje. Messrs. Greathead and Montague were admitted to bail immediately after their arrest; but the other two were placed in gaol.

Shortly after seven P.M., an immense gathering of the inhabitants of New Rush took place in front of the Court-house (Market-square). It did not appear to be generally known at the outset exactly what the object of the gathering was. Some present had been given to understand that certain canteens at Old De Beers were to be assailed, and the proprietors lynched. Indeed this was the report current during the day, and in anticipation of a visit to Old De Beers for such purpose, Inspector Gilfillan, with about forty of his police, had gone over to that camp. But it soon became known why the Civil Commissioner's office was surrounded. The arrest which had taken place had excited the diggers, and they were assembled to demand the release of the four men who were reported to be in prison. All kinds of threats were held out, but ultimately Mr. Giddy was "requested" to order the release of the prisoners. The Civil Commissioner then came out of his office, and mounting a chair, addressed the assembly. He said two of the prisoners had already been released, and he was quite prepared to release the other two on the same terms —£500 bail. If any of their friends would step forward and sign the necessary bail bonds, there would be an end to the matter. Two of Mr. Siebert's friends went forward and accepted the responsibility. They were conducted into the magistrate's office, and having signed the bail-bond, an order was granted for Siebert's release.

Mr. Giddy then addressed the people a second time. He said: "Gentlemen, three of the four prisoners arrested to-day have now been released, and if any two gentlemen present are prepared to follow the same course as Mr. Siebert's friends, in reference to the other prisoner, I am quite willing to admit him to bail also. I have fixed the bail in each case at £500. There is really no necessity whatever for this demonstration. The matter is very simple: four men are arrested upon a certain charge, and as I am willing to accept bail, it rests with you to secure their release in a proper legal way. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, it seems there has been unfortunately some misunderstanding about the swearing in of special constables. It is quite true that a number of special constables had been sworn in, but not wholly for the purpose

Digitized by Google

of quelling disturbances, as is generally supposed. That is one reason certainly, but another, and very important one too, was the necessity there exists for assisting the authorities in putting down a growing evil, and for increasing the means whereby rascally native servants and dishonest diamond buyers may be brought to justice. (Cheers.) The gentlemen who have been sworn in as special constables have very properly done so, with the view of showing their desire to uphold authority and discountenance anything like rioting and rowdyism. By the enrolment of their names, they have shown their desire to do that which every respectable citizen should do. Those present who may have a wish to adopt the same course will have an opportunity of doing so to-morrow morning. I have issued an order for the release of Siebert, and as soon as I have the names of two other persons willing to be sureties for the prisoner Blaine, I will give a similar order."

These remarks were respectfully listened to, and were followed by "three cheers for the Civil Commissioner."

The people then went off in a body to the gaol, and having secured the release of Siebert, were returning towards the Market-square, when a scene of wild confusion occurred. Between twenty and thirty of the mounted police, headed by Inspector Gilfillan, had just returned from Old De Beers (where they had left fifteen of their number), and were marching in fours towards the gaol when the crowd came upon them. They halted, and in vain shouted—"Stand back." Then commenced an attack upon the people. The police were armed with revolvers and bludgeons, and these latter they used with much energy, though rather too indiscriminately. They hit right and left, and inflicted wounds, in some instances, of a very serious nature, and as is too generally the case in occurrences of this sort, those who suffered were the least guilty. The police are censured for the course they adopted, no notice whatever having been given of their intention to attack, and very few of those who were in the street being more than mere spectators of riotous proceedings. The crowd, taken by surprise, dispersed for the moment, but some showed front. The police, however, having beaten their way through, made for the station, and, we believe, again appeared armed with their breech-loading sniders. A move was next made in the direction of the west end of the camp, but we are not aware that any properties were destroyed. There was a good deal of shouting and excitement, and the leading spirits anticipating what they considered unnecessary police interference, were armed; but we are happy to learn that nothing serious transpired after the collision referred to as above.

On yesterday morning the following Government notice was published:—

"The Civil Commissioner of Pniel has seen with regret that the hitherto orderly, well-conducted, and respectable community of these camps has lately permitted itself to be influenced by the ill-advised counsel of certain political agitators, who, most of them, have nothing to lose in a state of anarchy and confusion, seek to establish, instead of an organized and civilised Government, the reign of Judge Lynch and Rowdyism.

"The Civil Commissioner is sufficiently well acquainted with, and confident in the respectability and good and proper feeling of this community, to feel

assured that the great majority of the diggers would deplore as much as he a state of things where Courts of Law were superseded by a mob rule, and where the orderly and peacably disposed must succumb to the hasty and illegal decisions and executions of excited mobs and brute force; and he feels assured that in calling upon them to assist him in maintaining law and order, insuring to every one a fair hearing and impartial trial, his call will be almost unanimously responded to.

"In the past history of the camps, there are a sufficient number of well-known facts to convince the public that where special laws are required, to suit their special circumstances, the Government is in no degree averse to making such special provisions as may be required, and that a constitutional reference of any grievance will certainly be followed by an earnest endeavour on the part of the Government to grant redress. If, therefore, the digging community consider that further modifications of the Colonial law, or alterations in the form of government, are required to adapt the administration to the peculiar circumstances of the fields, let them state plainly their grievances, and use the unalienable, but constitutional privilege of Englishmen, by petitioning the Government, and they must be well aware that no reasonable request, *constitutionally* urged, will fail to meet with sympathy and consideration.

"The foregoing remarks are addressed to those who know and feel that the maintenance of their own freedom and privileges is utterly inconsistent with such exhibitions of license, and disregard of law as have lately taken place; and to prevent the recurrence of such scenes as may yet possibly be attempted to be enacted, books have been opened at the Civil Commissioner's Office, New Rush, and at the Magistrate's Office, Dutoitspan, where all true loyal subjects and lovers of order and good government are requested to enrol themselves as SPECIAL CONSTABLES, for the prevention of such scenes in future.

"It will be remembered how the mere fact that thousands having responded cordially to such a call as the present, utterly crushed out the anticipated riots in London, some years ago, and the Civil Commissioner feels sufficiently confident in the diggers to believe that they will almost to a man join in showing evil-disposed persons that they will not submit to live under the jurisdiction of Judge Lynch.

"R. W. H. GIDDY, Civil Commissioner.

"*July 18th*, 1872."

At three o'clock in the afternoon a meeting took place on the outside of the public offices, between the Commissioners, Mr. Campbell and Mr. Thompson, and the diggers. There were at least from 1,400 to 1,500 present. Mr. Giddy and Palgrave were present. Mr. Campbell was elected to the chair. On the motion of Mr. Knight, M.L.A., seconded by Mr. Owen, it was resolved that the Commissioners should meet a committee to represent the diggers "and make such modifications of the present unsuitable state of the laws as will prevent as far as possible the thefts of diamonds by native labourers, and their purchases by unprincipled dealers, as well as make such other alterations in the laws as will promote the public welfare."

Digitized by Google

The following gentlemen were appointed on the committee,—Messrs. James Hall, Owen Laing, Wainwright, George King, Ashwell, H. Brown, Atkins, Bean, A. Murray, Stanton, and W. Pohl.

The haranguing occupied about two hours. The meeting was very orderly; and on the Commissioners agreeing to the proposition that they should meet the Committee on Saturday, the meeting gave three cheers for Mr. Giddy, and then three cheers for everybody. The meeting, before breaking up, pledged themselves that peace and order should reign in the camp until Monday next.

(*From the Special Correspondent of the "Friend of the Free State."*)

THE UPSHOT OF THE RIOTING—THE CONCESSIONS OF THE COMMISSIONERS —THE IMPOTENCY AND UNFITNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT—WHAT IS WANTED TO SUPERSEDE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT—THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT SUITED TO THE FIELDS—CAPTAIN FINLASON SPOUTS —"WERRY LIKE A WHALE"—CAPTAIN OTHELLO'S OCCUPATION AND NATIONALITY GONE—AGITATOR BLANCHE PROPOSES TO CANONISE THE FIREBRANDS—MR. COMMISSIONER THOMPSON WON'T SIGN THE PROCLAMATION—CRUELTIES TO NATIVES—THE GOVERNOR OF GRIQUALAND WEST COMING TO THE FIELDS—ARRIVAL OF COMMANDER BOWKER—ANOTHER MAIL BAG DROPPED ON THE WAY, ETC.

De Beers, New Rush, July 27th, 1872.

My last letter conveyed the intelligence to your readers that the Diggers' Committee and the Commissioners had met in the public offices to confer upon the modifications demanded by the diggers in the laws as they now stand, and I sent you the "modifications" (as they were called), which were alone to satisfy the diggers. It was not known when the Free State post left this Rush what concessions the Commissioners would make. There was a prevailing idea about that they would make none, and that a repetition of the rioting, and setting fire to tents and canteens, and the destruction of men's stock in trade would follow. There are not a few in the camp who would regard a scrimmage as jolly good fun, and tent burning in the same light they would a bonfire. There are some who were elected on the committee, but not many, who talk with more flippancy than wisdom, and who speak of an anticipated rupture with Government, and the ruin of their neighbours, the canteen keepers, in a very gleeful strain. There was a good deal of that style of talk in the best-frequented bar-rooms on Monday morning, and there was not very much work done by the rowdy white diggers through the day. Grog and gambling were the order of things. The rowdy part of the diggers who attend mass meetings, industriously circulated a report that nothing would be conceded, and that the Commissioners had resolved to put down the diggers with a high hand. They knew nothing about it, of course, but there are gangs of men in all the camps who set up to be diggers *par excellence* who do nothing but loaf about, join Lynch's crew, drink "smoke" (that vile compound which is rank poison), and "jump" whatever they can come across. They have no

claims, are not interested in the right government of the country, and never do a day's digging from "year in to year out." You can see little knots of them at the corner of every street, and in every canteen where a likely man to "shout" is to be found. They would drink the Vaal River dry if it could be turned into Cape smoke. It is they who are the loudest; they who in the name of the diggers pounce upon the natives, and talk of grievances most of all. I do not mean your readers to infer that there is anything like satisfaction in the camp, even amongst the best men in it. There is not. All men, dealers as well as diggers, feel that Government has not taken that interest in the welfare of the fields that should have been taken in them. I do not say that this is altogether the fault of the Commissioners. I do not think it is, but I do think that the *Special Magistrate* was placed in a false position when he came here first, and that he has not improved that position since. The Commissioners have never worked together as they should have done. Commandant Bowker has been ill, or off recruiting for police, ever since he was appointed Commissioner. The Acting Commissioner, Mr. Giddy, lives at New Rush, and the other two are forty miles away from him. And I am not alone in thinking that Civil Commissioners and Resident Magistrates are not the men to form the Executive of a country out of it. It is to be hoped that, after what has occurred here, the Governor will see the imperative necessity of remodelling the Commission, and when His Excellency does that he had better keep the Commissioners together, that they may deliberate and prepare for coming events, not wait until events occur and then legislate for them as they have been doing hitherto. It is impossible that Civil Commissioners and Resident Magistrates in the fields can find time, with all the work they have to do in their own legitimate spheres, to undertake executive duties. The fact is, that the proper thing for the fields is a Lieut-Governor and an Executive, and for the local government of the fields, small boards to be elected by those who contribute directly to the revenue. The sooner we get that the better.

To return to the meeting. It was fixed to take place on Monday at three P.M. Early in the morning—soon after breakfast in fact—men commenced to show up from Dutoitspan, and they reported that the *Pan*ners were coming to the meeting a thousand strong, to back up the New Rush opponents of Government. About half an hour before the meeting a regiment of about a hundred and fifty Dutoitspan diggers marched into the market-place, headed by a Scotchman carrying a red flag—I suppose intended as the flag of the fiery Lynchers. By three P.M., the hour fixed for the meeting, there were over three thousand persons packed together in front of the public offices. A buckwaggon was drawn out into the square, and the leading members of the committee and the choicest spirits of the mass mounted it. There was great cheering. Mr. George King was elected chairman *nem. con.*, and he advised moderation, good manners, and deep consideration of the proposed concessions which the Commissioners offered to make. Mr. James Hall, of Kaffrarian celebrity, made a very telling speech, and said that the Commissioners had made much greater concessions than he expected they would have done. The concessions they

Digitized by Google

had made were enormous, and no reasonable digger could be other than satisfied. Some people, said Mr. Hall, are never satisfied with anything, but he was addressing respectable men, who he felt confident would listen to him with attention, and give the Commissioners credit for desiring to meet the diggers fairly. At the close of Mr. Hall's speech, although there were some interruptions whilst it was going on, there were three cheers. There followed some small talk, and then Captain Finlason came forward, and pitched into the British Government right and left, and flattered the Free State Government as thoroughly as a Government could be flattered. The fact is, that Captain Finlason is a disappointed man. He was in office under the Free State when the British Government, or rather Sir Henry Barkly, took over the dry diggings, and when that bit of taking over was done, our Othello Finlason found that his occupation was gone, and his love of nationality went off with it. He now sees that there is a mob, easy tools in anybody's hands, and he, full and boiling over with disappointment, flew to his revenge. He vowed so help his Bob, and begged his brother diggers to believe him, when he made out that the Free State Government is most generous, popular, and considerate, and the British Government weak, bad, revengeful, despotic, and cruel. This was just the sort of speech that came home slick to the feelings of the mass. They shouted and hurrahed during the time the speech was being made, and took the speaker into their loving arms when he had concluded, and carried him off in triumph. A man after their own heart is Finlason. In the Captain's estimation the Diggers' Committee are models for "local government" to be framed after, only they must be guided by himself under a Republican Flag. It was a terrible crime in Finlason's eyes that those who opened the Free State Government should take office under the British Government. The Captain's memory must be short. He forgets now, when he talks in favour of the Free State Government, what he said when that Government did him out of two months' salary. Other people do not forget it, however.

If Finlason's speech was racy, that of the indomitable Blanche was still more so. Blanche said it was clear that they owed the Lynchers who set the tents on fire a deep debt of gratitude. According to his showing, burning a canteen and smashing the canteen-keeper's stock in trade, is a most meritorious act. He regards the men who are in gaol on a charge of arson as martyrs to a good and holy cause—poor suffering martyrs, who ought to be canonised instead of incarcerated. He moved that the authorities be requested to give them their liberty, and also that the canteen-keepers whose tents were burned be compensated out of the general revenue. What do you think of that, you *Friend* of the Free State? The chairman of the meeting had too much sense to put such a resolution, and then of course there was a row. There were yellings, and hootings, and hissing, and cries of all sorts. The proposed motion was not put, however, and the meeting broke up without it. The next day a proclamation appeared in the *Diamond News*. You will observe that Mr. Commissioner Thompson's name does not figure in connection with that proclamation, and I hear from good authority that it was not attached to the other document which Mr. Hall read at Monday's meeting quite fairly, but that does

not much matter. His Excellency will never endorse either the document which contains what is called the "modifications," or the proclamation either. Mr. Thompson is one of those who do not believe in conceding ruffianism, and there are a great many who subscribe to his views. There are about a hundred and twenty respectable men who have enrolled themselves as special constables. *They* don't believe in firebrand justice. The dealers and all those who have something at stake in the fields set their faces against rowdyism, come in what shape it may.*

The Governor of Griqualand West is to be here on the 15th of next month, and a house on Market-square has been taken for His Excellency and suite. The general desire is, that the noble visitor to Africa, the Russian Prince Alexis, should be one of the Governor's party. But festivities will not set the present dissatisfaction at rest. His Excellency must come prepared to listen—not as a matter of form, but as a matter of policy—and he will not only have to listen, but he will have to think over what is said to him, and act upon it. It was said that Mr. John Campbell was to go down to see the Governor in Capetown before His Excellency set out from Government House for the fields; but as he is coming in such a short time, it is hardly to be expected that that will be the case now.

There is a memorial hawked about the camp, which has for its object the release of the Lynchers now in custody. This effort to press the authorities to set the prisoners free will have no effect. One of them is committed for trial already, and the other will most likely be committed before Monday is over, for they are to be brought up again on that day. That the owners of claims and employers of native labour should be exasperated is not to be wondered at. The major part of the natives are thieves, and that they steal a great many diamonds is more than certain. The up-country traders and the lowest class of canteen-keepers fare better than the men who buy claims at a high rate and pay wages, in many cases. But this is not to be remedied by cruel treatment of the natives, or by doing injustice to them. Burning tents will not remedy it, and smashing bottles of beer and brandy will not put an end to the purchasing of stolen diamonds. As a rule, masters deal kindly by their native servants, and wisely too. To treat them unkindly is to drive them from the fields, and the fields without native labour would not be worth much. If the natives are to have no claims, are not to purchase guns, not to have a drop of beer or wine or brandy, and are to be treated cruelly into the bargain, instead of being brought down by an association of masters, they will soon be scarce and difficult to procure.

Masters are now every day complained of and punished for cruelty to their native servants. There are two masters now in prison charged with manslaughter and murder. The murder case is a very dreadful one, according to

---

* The concession referred to was that forbidding coloured men to dig or deal in diamonds. This was granting the extremest point to the malcontents. Mr. Commissioner Thompson resolutely protested against the proclamation, and it was immediately withdrawn. A third riot followed on this disappointment.

Digitized by Google

the evidence taken. They tied a native servant's hands to his feet, and then beat him with a thick rope until he was exhausted, and could neither speak nor move. Then they stuck him in the back of the head with a knife, and when he was dead they called in a doctor, and told him the deceased met with these injuries when drunk. The post-mortem examination showed that the man had taken nothing stronger than coffee. In another case, a native man, also suspected of stealing diamonds, protested that he was innocent: his master had him held down, and pulled out all his teeth with a pair of carpenter's pincers. This is refined cruelty brought to a very fine point of torture indeed.

The intelligence from the gold-fields becomes more and more encouraging. A train of regular passenger waggons go to and fro, and are all well freighted. The fare is £7. 10*s*.

THE END.

PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO., CITY ROAD, LONDON.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

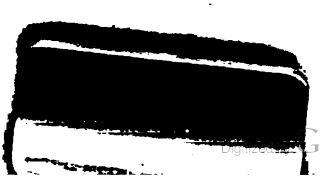
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

89090381864

b89090381864a

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

B89090381864A

Digitized by Google